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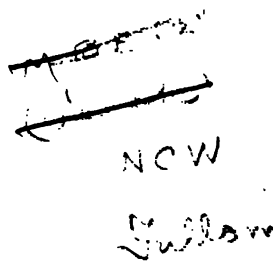
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THE

MAN OF THE WORLD;

OR,

VANITIES OF THE DAY.

BY

S. W. FULLOM,

AUTHOR OF "THE GREAT HIGHWAY," "THE MARVELS OF SCIENCE," "THE HISTORY O' WOMAN," ETC. ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS ON STEEL,

BY JOHN LEECH.

2 29

"It's a mad world, my masters."—OLD PLAY

THIRD EDITION.

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1857.

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TO

GENERAL SIR HOWARD DOUGLAS, BART.,

G.C.B., F.R.S., D.C.L.,

ONE OF ENGLAND'S FOREMOST SOLDIERS,

AND EQUALLY DISTINGUISHED IN SCIENCE AND LITERATURE,

THIS STORY

IS SINCERELY INSCRIBED

BY

THE AUTHOR.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

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THE MAN OF THE WORLD;

OR,

VANITIES OF THE DAY.

CHAPTER I.

MOTHER AND DAUGHTER.

'I DECLARE you look divine! Those pearls are extremely becoming, and the camelia exactly suits your hair. Nothing could be more exquisite! And it is well it should be so—for I have a presentiment that to-night will complete your triumph."

The young lady thus addressed had finished her toilet, and had just dismissed its ministering attendant, when her mother, dressed for the character of chaperon, entered the room, and greeted her with this salutation.

"My triumph!" she replied, with an unconscious sigh, yet glancing as she spoke at the fair face and sylph-like form, sparkling with gems, which were reflected in the adjacent mirror.

"Yes, Rosalie. Will it be no triumph to be mistress of unbounded wealth, to hear yourself called 'lady,' even though it be only the lady of a banker baronet—to live in

the highest circles of fashion, and to be, in short, one of the notables of the great world?"

"He is so old, mamma."

"Old!—You call Sir Blundell Haughton old!—a man hardly fifty, in the very prime of life! You are paying a poor compliment to me, Rosalie!" And the speaker, who, perhaps, had just reached her jubilee, or might even look older by the tell-tale light of day, drew herself up, as if still clinging to the delusion of youth.

"I did not mean *that*. You are not fifty, I think, till next—"

"Pray never mind when I'm fifty," said Mrs. Addlefield, sharply. "I really wonder you can be so rude."

"Well, I won't talk of ages; but I'm sure, mamma, you would suit Sir Blundell better than I should, and he would be very suitable to you. There's Eleanor Haughton almost as old as I am, and it will be so odd for her to be calling me mamma. If you are anxious to provide Sir Blundell with a wife, why don't you have him yourself?"

"Now you are talking more sensibly," said Mrs. Addlefield, with a smile, and following her daughter's eye to the glass. Perhaps that faithful monitor, however, reminded her, with its customary candour, that the bloom on her cheek was of a different texture from her daughter's; for she added quickly—"But I have no intention—at least, at present—of changing my condition, while you, on the contrary, should now think seriously of being settled."

"Sir Blundell is such an oddity—always talking about taste, or his horrid partner, Mr. Moneypenny; and he quite tires me with his solemn 'in fact.'"

"What nonsense! he has wealth enough to cover greater defects. Suppose he does dwell rather too much on taste, every one admits his taste is unimpeachable; and as to his partner, his name, I grant you, is horrid, but it has a gold-

mine sort of sound, and that reconciles one to its repetition. Besides, religion teaches us"—Mrs. Addlefield was constantly referring to what religion taught, though she never profited by its lessons—"that we should overlook the little failures of others, since we have many of our own to answer for. I thought we had fully canvassed this affair, Rosalie; and that you had agreed, if Sir Blundell proposed—as he certainly will—to become Lady Haughton."

"And I have felt unhappy ever since."

"Because you've been allowing your imagination to wander elsewhere. You may well blush, throwing your thoughts away on a scapegrace like Everard Danvers. If you were to form such a *mésalliance*, you would break my heart."

"No one could call it a *mésalliance*," replied Rosalie, pouting. "Everard's family ranks with the oldest in the country—which is what we can't say of ours. Besides, he's the nephew of a baronet, and may be a baronet himself some day."

"Psha! you forget Sir Bernard Seaford has a son, who, indeed, is on the point of being married; and a few years may greatly enlarge the family tree. But enough of this. Danvers is very well as an acquaintance—as a friend; but as a husband, he is out of the question. We know he is poor, and I believe he is over head and ears in debt. It is not you he would marry, Rosalie: it is your ten thousand pounds—too small a portion to maintain even yourself. And what would become of you when he had spent it?"

"I'm sure he loves me," said Rosalie. And another glance at the flattering mirror told her she had grounds for her faith.

"You can't help his continuing to love you," returned the mother, with some emphasis. "But you mustn't marry him. No, Rosalie! even if you would, you can't;—your

inclinations and your habits will not permit you to resign a life of luxury and gaiety and power, the good opinion of your friends, and the admiration of the crowd, for poverty and debt. You know you could not exist out of society."

Rosalie's eyes, instead of turning on the glass, were now cast downward. "If he still loved me," she said, "if he were happy and content, I could bear even poverty. Yes, though—"

"There, say no more," interrupted Mrs. Addlefield. "This is but the old childish romance, which has been said ten thousand times, and ten thousand times bitterly regretted. But this gay, dissolute, heartless man—you may frown, but I see Danvers as he is—would not love you, Rosalie, when he had squandered your little fortune. No, he would hate you; and you—when you saw the misery in which you were involved, the sorrow and disgrace he had brought upon you—*you would hate him.* You start. Then, how much better to be happy yourself, and still preserve his—his *friendship.*"

Rosalie looked up in her mother's face as she uttered these words, and the colour of her own deepened.

"Let us go," she observed, in a tremulous voice. "I am ready."

"I have your promise," said Mrs. Addlefield.

"Yes," was the scarcely audible reply.

And they passed from the boudoir together.

CHAPTER II.

ALL THE WORLD'S A STAGE.

EVERYBODY had gone to the old, or, seeing how of late years its proportions have been amplified, perhaps one should say, the new suburb of Kensington, in one great press, to the residence of Sir Blundell Haughton, the banker prince. The millionaire inhabited a dwelling worthy of his wealth and position. Nampced House, built when the *locale* was exclusively courtly, was of the date of the first James, but had subsequently been fitted up in the mediæval style, with equal taste and splendour. In this respect, indeed, it might be approached by other mansions, but in one point it was peculiar. It possessed a little theatre—a sort of cabinet or household stage, a gem in its way, unique in all its parts; and this was the attraction that, on the present occasion, drew the world of fashion to its doors.

Private theatricals are usually amusing from their shortcomings rather than their excellence; but in this instance the amateurs possessed no mean share of histrionic talent, and, being also persons of consideration, it was naturally magnified by report. Hence not only every seat, but every nook—every spot from which a glimpse of the performances could be obtained—now had its occupant, and the little theatre was one blaze of light, fashion, and beauty.

Mrs. Addlefield and Rosalie were installed in a private box, just as the orchestra were in the midst of the

overture; and here Sir Blundell Haughton, who was got up with the utmost care, but whose half century of years still peered through the rich dye of his hair and whiskers, had already joined them.

"It was so kind of you to reserve this dear little box for us, Sir Blundell," said Mrs. Addlefield. "Really, Rosalie—Rosalie and I are greatly obliged to you."

"I hope Miss Addlefield will be amused," replied the host, with a deferential glance at Rosalie. "But an exhibition of this kind demands every indulgence."

"I'm sure *Eleanor* will not require any," observed Rosalie, smiling, though rather constrainedly.

"Oh, no! not Eleanor, certainly," said Mrs. Addlefield, "she is so gifted." And she added aside to Sir Blundell —"Rosalie is so attached to Eleanor."

"Eleanor is very fortunate to have obtained her regard," replied the baronet; "for though her manner is cold, she shows excellent taste in selecting her friends—in fact, excellent!"

"Well, it is strange, that is what Rosalie has always said—have you not, love? She has fancied Eleanor as a friend, Sir Blundell—as a companion, for the very reason that she thought the seeming coldness of her manner covered deep feelings, which it might be difficult to interest, but which, once awakened, would, like her own, retain their impression for ever."

"Indeed, mamma," began Rosalie, who now heard these sentiments for the first time, "you must—"

"Confess I was wrong! I do, my love—most willingly. I acknowledge I thought there was something too much of hauteur about dear Eleanor, though you considered it arose more from reserve—a reserve not unbecoming. And now I begin to think your perceptions of

her character were correct. Yes, you were right—right, as you always are."

"I was only about to say Eleanor had never shown any coldness to me," observed Rosalie, "quite the contrary. But," she added, bending over her satin play-bill, "the piece is the *Lady of Lyons*, I see. Who is this plays *Claude*, Sir Blundell?—Harold Arkworth! is he clever?"

"I believe he is," replied the baronet, in a tone, however, which seemed to intimate that Harold Arkworth was nobody.

"Related to our old friends, the Arkworths of Ivy Court, I dare say," said Mrs. Addlefield to Rosalie, though the observation was really meant for Sir Blundell.

"Well, no," remarked the baronet; "he is a sort of connection of my own, a very distant connection—in fact, very! He's an *employé* at the banking-house, but he got into some discredit with my partner, Mr. Moneypenny, for writing poetry in one of the magazines, and he would probably have had to leave, if Eleanor had not taken him up. At her request I invited him here, and he made himself so useful about the theatricals, that they included him in the corps."

"How interesting!" exclaimed Mrs. Addlefield. "I'm really quite impatient to see this young genius. And so are you, I'm sure, Rosalie."

"Oh, quite," replied Rosalie, abstractedly, and with a slight start. She had indeed heard but little of what was said, her eye having, in the interim, fallen on a fine, military-looking man in the pit, who was no other than Everard Danvers, but from whom, as he now turned round, she hastily withdrew her glance.

At this moment the curtain rose; and if the company had been charmed, in the first instance, by the tasteful decoration of the theatre, all acknowledged that the illusion

presented by the scenery was perfect. After a careless look at the stage, Mrs. Addlefield amused herself with turning her lorgnette on the audience, scrutinising, with a critic's eye, every fair face and toilet, so that she soon knew how every lady was dressed, and how many were rouged. But gradually she became interested in the performance, which, indeed, was far above the average of such exhibitions, and might, as regarded two or three of the characters, be even pronounced excellent. The attention of Mrs. Addlefield seemed to be engrossed entirely by the *Lady* and *Claude*, represented by Eleanor Haughton and Harold Arkworth; nor did she, in this respect, differ apparently from the rest of the company. There was a force, a reality, a spirit in the cast of these two characters, in their looks and gestures, as well as their words, that appealed to every heart; and what the performance wanted in the finished craft of the actor, it more than supplied in truthfulness and power. At first there was a coldness, a hauteur, about the beautiful Eleanor Haughton, as if the original pride of the heroine were really her own; but soon, with woman's susceptibility to the melting influence of poetry, she unconsciously changed her manner, her voice and feelings warmed with action, and she threw herself unreservedly into her part. As if inspired by the change, *Claude*, too, became more earnest; the melodious words flowed, like living music, from his lips; they glowed in his face, they beamed from his eye; and the shadowy creation of the poet was visibly realised.

"He loves her!" said Mrs. Addlefield to Rosalie, as the curtain fell, and their host turned to speak to some one at he door of the box.

"And she?" replied Rosalie, in the same tone, and with awakened interest.

"Time will show. But are you not neglecting your

own cards? You may begin to make yourself agreeable, just as you're losing the game."

Rosalie sighed, yet since she had entered the mansion, and once more contemplated the opulence of which Sir Blundell was the master, a change had come over her; and, influenced by the worldly feelings in which she had been trained, she insensibly yielded to the designs of her mother.

"How charmingly Eleanor performs!" she remarked to Sir Blundell, who now returned to her side. And Mrs. Addlefield, not to interrupt conversation, busied herself with her glass. "Really," continued Rosalie, "it seems, as Shakespeare would say, her vocation."

"You are a partial judge," replied the baronet, gratified by the praise of his only child: "not but what she does very well, though, for my part, I prefer her musical talents. But Eleanor has altogether excellent taste."

"Superb," said Rosalie; "and the cast just suits her. Do you admire the play?"

"Well, so, so," said the baronet, tapping his diamond snuff-box.

"And what do you think of *Claude?*"

"The very pink of a villain."

"Oh, fie!"

"Eh! why you don't mean to say you—"

"I adore him."

"The young man or the character?" inquired Sir Blundell, facetiously.

"Oh! the character, of course," laughed Rosalie.

"Had it been the young man, I must have called him out," rejoined Sir Blundell, gallantly. "As for the character, you must own he was a very sad fellow—in fact, very!"

"Well, he was, in some respects; but it was in a good

cause—for a worthy object, even though it might not, in the first place, have been dictated by a worthy motive. We women pardon much and overlook much when we are loved."

"That is very kind of you—in fact, very! There is no denying women are very superior to men."

"You are a general admirer, Sir Blundell."

"Yes," said Sir Blundell, smirking—"that is to say," he added, recollecting himself—"oh, dear, no!"

"Then, you ought to be: for I'm sure you are a general favourite."

"Ah, you flatter! But if I could make bold to hope I were—I dare not say a favourite, but not disagreeable, in a certain quarter—with yourself, I should indeed esteem myself fortunate."

Rosalie looked down. Now that her fate seemed to tremble in the balance, nature made a last effort to regain its ascendency. Her colour, so dazzling in that light, came and went; and she could hardly repress the emotion which sought to rise in her bosom. But Sir Blundell was encouraged, rather than daunted, by her agitation, and he was about to pursue the subject, when he caught the eye of Mrs. Addlefield, who, having overheard all that had passed, could not resist looking round at this critical moment, and thus, of course, put a stop to further proceedings. But Mrs. Addlefield was not one to be hoisted with her own petard; and seeing that nothing more was to be done in the present instance, resolved to create another opportunity.

"Where are they all going, Sir Blundell?" she asked, as the company simultaneously rose.

"To the refreshment-room, I presume," replied Sir Blundell. "May I have the pleasure of taking charge of you and Miss Addlefield?"

"You are very obliging."

And they all quitted the box.

A somewhat low, but fine old staircase, banistered with massive oak, brought them to a landing, or rather ante-chamber, from which a suite of apartments branched on either side, and another open doorway exposed the refreshment-room. This was already crowded, and the company was still trooping up the stairs, while not a few sauntered through the apartments, admiring the sumptuous furniture, the rare pictures, and the antique decorations. The elaborately-carved oaken wainscoat, panelled with portraits, displaying the life-like touches of Holbein, Vandyke, and Lely, and gorgeously blazoned with gilt, had, indeed, a fine effect, glowing under the effulgence of dazzling chandeliers, which, at the same time, poured a flood of light on the richly-embellished ceiling. Statues appeared at effective points, or colossal vases, garnished with flowers, which exhibited all the brilliant colours of the rainbow. The living figures—beauty of every order, attired as became her best, in textures light and elegant, giving an ethereal appearance—heightened the *coup d'œil;* and, as the guests lounged through the rooms, every one was ready to concur with Mrs. Addlefield that Sir Blundell Haughton's taste, if rather obtrusive, was unimpeachable.

The ball-room was yet but partially lit, one end, opening from the ante-chamber, being perfectly resplendent, while a solitary candelabrum lent only a dim twilight to the mid-saloon; and, beyond, its ample limits were veiled by darkness. Here, in the sheltering gloom, couches offered sequestered spots to shy lovers, who, within sight of a crowd, might be alone; and Mrs. Addlefield was too adroit and experienced a monœuvrer to overlook these voluptuous shades.

"This is charming, Sir Blundell," she said, pausing to

look round. "But I must really sit down. It's quite a journey through these rooms, though everything is so admirable, one is not sensible of their extent, till overcome with fatigue. Such taste—everywhere such taste!"

"Exquisite!" exclaimed Rosalie.

Sir Blundell thought so too.

"The cool air here is quite refreshing, after the close atmosphere of the theatre," observed Mrs. Addlefield. "And it is so nice to have it coming in fresh from the garden. I can almost fancy I smell the flowers. Ah! I must positively go and look out on the terrace."

"Allow me to —"

"No, no, Sir Blundell. I must be alone, or it will spoil all my romance. Ha! ha! you see I have not lost my romance yet."

So saying, she proceeded a few paces up the saloon, when she disappeared in an indentation, terminated by a high wide doorway, through which she was indeed met by the fresh air from without. A broad terrace, smooth as marble, then presented itself, and a flight of steps descended to an avenue of trees, whose tall boughs met in an arch above, visible through the weird shadows of the night.

It was a scene that, in its repose, its silence, its solitude, contrasted vividly with that within, and, for this reason alone, might have awakened for a moment solemn thoughts—might have weaned the soul from the worldly vanity behind, and brought it to contemplate, as an image of the uncertain future, the tranquil, if sombre prospect spread before. But no such thoughts could visit Mrs. Addlefield. She lived only in the present; and her imagination was still with Rosalie and Sir Blundell. For her there was no happiness and no enjoyment out of the world of fashion: to secure this for her daughter was to retain it for herself; and, in pursuit of her object, she had in-

curred expenses wholly unwarranted by her moderate fortune, but which now, towards the close of Rosalie's second season, she hoped that a wealthy alliance would amply requite. Her sole reflection at this moment was, that in a few minutes that stately mansion, and all it contained, with the princely revenue of Sir Blundell, might be her daughter's—her own!

Trained in the same worldly views, Rosalie, left to herself, was not without good impulses, and, with her mother's *penchant* for a gay life, still shrank from the step which was to decide her fate. Her natural inclinations would have prompted her to accept, without consideration, an humbler lot with one she loved; but, as has been shown, she had easily been overruled by Mrs. Addlefield. The inborn feeling, however, remained in her heart, and she could hardly still its tumultuous beatings, when she found herself alone with Sir Blundell.

"The dancing will not be in this room to-night, I suppose?" she said, rousing herself, after an embarrassing pause.

"No," replied the baronet; "Eleanor proposes to use the gallery."

"That will be very pleasant."

"You like dancing?"

"Moderately," said Rosalie, with humane regard for the baronet's years; "but I enjoy quite as much seeing others dance. There is such grace, such beauty, in the wavy evolutions and intermingling figures of the quadrille, in the airy circlings of the waltz, in the freedom of the polka, that, as the dancers glide by, it seems to me the very music of motion."

"You see everything in an original light," replied Sir Blundell; "you have such excellent taste."

"If *you* say so, I shall really begin to think I have,

Sir Blundell, though I have never been so conceited before. But I confess I have an ambition that way. I admire taste. But yours is so refined, so unique: you make it an art."

It was a point on which the baronet could afford to be modest, and he said with a smile—"You rate it too high—in fact, too high!"

"I repeat what every one says. And then you don't confine yourself to one thing; but pictures, china, curiosities, no matter what, the oddest little precious things imaginable, you pick them all out with the same facility. But *apropos* of the ball—you *must* dance to-night, Sir Blundell; you positively must!"

The baronet laughed. "Well, if I must," he said, "I obey; but it is on condition you consent to be my partner."

"I shall be most happy."

"And could you reconcile yourself to remaining my partner, Rosalie?" said Sir Blundell, tenderly. "Say—" and he took her hand, which, though partly turning away, she permitted him to retain.

"You consent—you will be Lady Haughton?" said the eager baronet. And Rosalie, with real agitation, replied in the affirmative.

They were both silent for an instant. The baronet, being a person of such refined taste, and withal elderly, did not clasp his mistress in his arms; and Rosalie longed to plunge in the crowd, to escape the attentions of her affianced husband.

"There is mamma," she said, suddenly. "She seems to be looking for us. Shall we go to her?"

"With all my heart," replied the baronet. And leading her up to Mrs. Addlefield, he said—"Allow me to present to you, my dear madam, the future Lady Haughton—that is, if we have your approbation."

"What a surprise!" said Mrs. Addlefield—"and a joyful one! Yes, my dear Sir Blundell, if there is one man upon earth to whom I would readily entrust my dear Rosalie's happiness, it is yourself. Religion teaches us we must alter our condition, and I resign myself to the necessity; but—pray forgive me—for the moment I cannot repress my feelings. My dearest Rosalie, shall we ask dear Sir Blundell to take us into the gallery? they are dancing there."

Her form seemed to dilate as, accepting Sir Blundell's arm, she swept up the saloon, and, like Crusoe, considered herself the monarch of all she surveyed. The baronet also walked with a statelier step, and, as he entered the crowded gallery, glanced proudly at his betrothed, as if, even in her, he had consulted less his happiness than his taste.

Almost as they entered, they were met by a young girl, who equalled Rosalie in beauty, though her seventeen summers—it was easy to see they had all been summers—had not yet ripened her charms.

"Miss Haughton, how is it you are not dancing?" said Mrs. Addlefield, in a somewhat patronising tone.

"Because I'm not inclined," replied the young lady, coldly. "Ah! Rosalie!"

"Dear Eleanor, I am so glad to see you," said Rosalie, slipping her arm round Eleanor's slender waist. The young girl, who had stood so cold and proud before the mother, unbent to the more gentle daughter. And how Rosalie would have rejoiced, had prudence permitted, to have thrown herself into her arms, and confided to her the secret of her real feelings.

"Something has happened that Miss Haughton does not dream of," observed Mrs. Addlefield, with a significant smile. "But Sir Blundell will tell you soon, my dear."

"Certainly," said Sir Blundell; "that is—"

"No, not now—don't tell her now," cried Rosalie.

"The sooner the better, my love," returned Mrs. Addlefield. "Such a sensible girl as Miss Haughton should know at once." And she added in an audible whisper to Eleanor—"You are to have a new mamma."

"Yes," said Sir Blundell, with rather a forced smile; "in fact, your friend Rosalie is going to marry me, Eleanor."

The colour spread over Eleanor's face, like a flash of pain, and she glanced quickly at her father and Rosalie, when, as if conciliated by their looks, she took Rosalie's hand, and pressed it in both her own.

"You will love him," she said, "and what can I wish more—except that you may be happy!"

"Good child!" said Sir Blundell, with genuine feeling; "you make us all happy."

Mrs. Addlefield, though she made no remark, thought otherwise, and saw in the baronet's love for his daughter an obstacle to the ascendency of Rosalie. But when Rosalie became Lady Haughton, it would not be difficult, she thought, to place Eleanor on a different footing.

"We are going to dance, dear Eleanor," said Rosalie; "and we must have you for our *vis-à-vis*. There, they are just forming a quadrille. We'll take our places at once, if you will bring your partner."

Eleanor looked round for one, and had not to wait long; for Everard Danvers, who had overheard Rosalie's last words, just as he was approaching to engage her hand, instantly presented himself.

Rosalie could hardly suppress an exclamation when, as he came opposite to her, she encountered his dark, penetrating gaze; and the touch of his hand, as they met in the dance, sent a thrill of pain through her veins. For an instant he was by her side.

"Your mother is watching us," he said between his teeth, "but I must speak. By all you hold dear, I conjure you to see me alone for a moment. I will wait for you on the terrace."

His words, his voice, and his air of seeming desperation, though an experienced observer might have detected in it something of malignity, alarmed, distressed, and melted Rosalie; and her agitation did not escape the notice of Mrs. Addlefield, who, as the quadrille terminated, was hurrying to her side, when Rosalie, seizing the opportunity, disappeared in the throng.

While the worldly mother had been scrutinising every gesture of her daughter, another of the company, more a spectator than a guest, was equally observant of Eleanor. Harold Arkworth stood amidst the crowd, bitterly conscious, in his isolation, that if his presence were tolerated, his society was shunned; and he lamented the kindly influence which, meaning him well, had unintentionally exposed him to such a humiliation. But the irritation, even the indignation, he naturally felt at his exclusion from pleasures he had been invited to share, though the fruitful germ of feelings destined to influence materially his future life, were as nothing compared with the sharp pang of jealousy that convulsed his breast, when he beheld Eleanor, to whom his heart was devoted, gliding like a fairy through the dance, by the side of the handsome Everard Danvers. Then, indeed, there seemed to be a gulf between them, as if he belonged, not only to another class, but to an inferior creation; and there rose in his heart a stern resolve to repudiate this distinction, and to break it down, and trample it under foot. The scowl he threw around was a declaration of war—that war, the most bitter, which marshals class against class.

"Mr. Arkworth," said a sweet voice, falling on his

troubled breast like oil on the waters, "I have not had an opportunity before to congratulate you on your performance this evening. It was really brilliant."

"If it deserve any praise, it is you who should receive it," replied Harold, bending, "for I caught the inspiration from you."

"I should rather say, I caught it from you," replied Eleanor, "for as you spoke, the play seemed to me to become a reality. I was carried away, as it were, by my part, and lost my own identity. But this could not have happened unless you, on your side, had sustained the impression. I don't say it in reference to my performance, which at best could be but mediocre; but this illusion, this incorporation of the actor with his part, must, I think, be felt, if an actor would excel."

"Undoubtedly. The actor should make himself one with the poet. He should search his thoughts, feel his sentiments, and respond to his emotions. This is the reason why we have so few good actors. They do not realise, because they do not feel; and, in some cases, do not even understand."

"That is precisely my own view."

"I'm glad to have mine so confirmed. But, indeed the result will appear less surprising, if we reflect that an actor must raise himself to the level of the poet, and consider that all are not capable of this elevation. How many, for instance, attempt the creations of Shakespeare, and how few understand them!"

"Yet Hamlet has given us precise instructions on every point."

"Precise indeed; yet Hamlet himself is inscrutable; and to this day the learned are divided as to whether he was a lunatic or a philosopher."

"If he were mad, there was method in his madness."

"And sublimity! Mad he could not be, but he was blasted —just as an oak is riven by lightning, and remains erect."

"It is terrible, but I should like to think him mad."

"May I ask why?"

"Because I would not for worlds consider him cruel."

"And you are right. Not the desire of revenge could make him cruel; for even his father's ghost could not goad him to revenge. He resolved, but did not strike. His thoughts were of blood, but he was not swift to shed it."

"That is not what I meant, but his conduct to Ophelia. Poor Ophelia!"

"And can you blame him for that? Ah! how must his noble heart have been crushed, when its very love became, not dead, but forgotten. Ophelia herself was more touched by his desolation than his coldness. It was this—her sympathy for him, and not despair for herself—as I like to believe, that drove her distracted."

"You make me think still harder of Hamlet, by throwing a new light on Ophelia. But I am drawing you into a discussion which will prevent your dancing, and they are now taking their places."

"You are engaged, I dare say, many deep?" said Harold, dejectedly.

"No, I am not."

"But for the next quadrille, at least?"

"No."

"May I—have the honour of your hand, then," said Harold, amazed at his own boldness.

The hand was his. He was standing with her—by her side, her companion, her partner. The room seemed to whirl; the lights, as he looked up, shone like stars; the music—it was her voice, for he heard nothing else—thrilled through his heart and his soul: earth seemed a paradise, and Eleanor an angel.

Meanwhile, Rosalie made her way to the terrace, which, after hurrying through the rooms, in momentary fear of being missed and followed, she reached breathless, scarcely knowing what she did.

"I thought—I knew you would come, Rosalie," said Danvers, stealing up to her from the deep shadow. "But we may be observed here: let us go into the garden."

"I—I cannot, Captain Danvers," replied Rosalie, in tremulous tones. "I—"

But Danvers led her down the steps into the avenue, and she did not oppose him.

"What is this, Rosalie? what has happened?" he said, hurriedly.

Rosalie was silent.

"Your conduct both wounds and perplexes me," pursued Danvers, "and I have a right to demand an explanation."

"A right!"

"Yes, you have given me one, if not in words, in your demeanour—in your encouragement of my addresses."

"I never heard before that I was honoured by your addresses, Captain Danvers! How, then, could I have encouraged them?"

"I have told you already—by a thousand signs, a thousand incidents. And will you say, Rosalie, a woman knows not when she is loved, without an explicit declaration?"

"That can be her only assurance."

"And have we come to such a pass, that young ladies, new to life and the world, are so cautious, so calculating, so prudent! I thought it was woman's nature—or, at least, yours, Rosalie—to be confiding and trustful. I imagined you would see, in my every look, how much I admired, how devotedly I loved you. I seized every

means of evincing my preference; and you—can you deny it?—have welcomed my attentions."

"You never said you loved me."

"Then, I say so now."

"It is too late."

"Ha!"

"I am pledged to—to—Oh! unhappy that I am!"

Could she have discerned his face, and seen the dark scowl that passed over it—could she have looked into his breast, and recognised the black passions, the malice, hatred, and fury, the exasperation and desperation, that animated it—could she have known that he was a reprobate and a bankrupt, whose last hope was her dowry, she might have come to another conclusion. Yet there is no knowing: woman is such a mystery!

"Rosalie, hear me!" he said, vehemently. "I love you; and you, say what you will, love me. Do me not the further wrong of denying it; for I will not, dare not, believe you. This engagement is not of your making, but your mother's; and if you lend yourself to it, you will be perjured—doubly perjured;—to me, whom you jilt, and to your husband, whom you will deceive."

"Ah! do not speak to me thus, Everard," said Rosalie, imploringly. "I cannot bear it."

"Better to hear the truth now, than discover it when the die is cast. But, no! this sacrifice must not, shall not be! You possess my love, Rosalie; accept my suit; and give happiness both to yourself and me."

"Alas! why did you not speak before? why did you not tell me, as I thought—ay, even wished, that you sought my heart and hand? I could not bestow them unasked. I could not stake my existence on a conjecture! And now—"

"Why, now we understand each other, and you will

be mine. Yes!"—and he drew her to his side—"this night, this very hour. Listen to me, Rosalie. An express leaves town at twelve o'clock for Carlisle, which is but a short distance from Gretna; we can pass out by the garden-door, of which I have secured a key, and my cabriolet will convey us in a few minutes to the station. Can you hesitate? Come, come!"—

"I must not listen to you, Everard—yes, for once, Everard! Ah! why do you tempt me?"—And she tried to stop, but he gently forced her along. "Oh! leave me! leave me, I implore you!" she said, in accents of distress and doubt.

"Never!" exclaimed Danvers.

"Yes, you shall—this moment," said a third voice. And his arm was seized by Mrs. Addlefield. "Your fine scheme, sir, is now foiled. If you are a man of honour, you will abandon the pursuit."

"It is rather you who should abandon your design, madam," replied Danvers, with constrained calmness. "But let your daughter decide for herself; and here, in your presence, say whether she prefers your choice or her own."

"Be assured, her choice will not be you. That would be to embrace poverty, misery, and ruin."

"But if he loves me," said Rosalie, convulsively, "if—"

"Nonsense," replied Mrs. Addlefield. "Captain Danvers, my daughter is a minor; and if she marries without my permission before she comes of age, her fortune, by her father's will, passes to the issue of the marriage, but will never be possessed by her husband. There, good night!"

And, taking Rosalie's hand, she drew her away. The unwilling girl looked back; but Danvers, if he saw her

turn, made no sign. Without a pause, he strode rapidly down the walk, in the opposite direction; and, pushing through a shrubbery, reached a small door, opening to the road. As he passed out, a cabriolet, waiting on the other side of the road, drove up, and he was springing in, when he was seized by two men, who darted from behind an adjacent projection, while a third took possession of the vehicle.

"All right, Captain!" said one of his captors. "Suit of Abrahams."—And he produced a writ.

"Been a-looking out for you 'bove a month, Captain," cried the other. "But I never knowed such a dodger as you are—no, I never!"

"Vagabonds! you'll pull my coat off," said Danvers, fiercely. "Drop your hold, or—"

"There don't make a fuss, Captain, and expose yourself before your friends. You know I'm not a bad sort—you know Hawker! There, jump in, and go off quiet. Just help the Captain into the cab, Todsby."

"All serene!" replied Todsby. "Did you ever!"

Danvers, seeing it was useless to resist, yielded to necessity, and throwing himself into the cabriolet, gave up the reins to Hawker, and was driven off to the remote purlieus of Whitecross-street.

CHAPTER III.

UNDER A CLOUD.

HAD Danvers been accustomed to be under a cloud, he would probably have directed his captors to drive him to a sponging-house, where gentlemen vegetating may, by paying rather high for their lodgings, be accommodated with a private dungeon. But he had hitherto enjoyed complete immunity from personal restraint, and hence was very imperfectly informed of the privileges of that state of being. On this point, his creditor, Mr. Abrahams, might indeed have enlightened him, as he was himself the proprietor of a sponging-house; but no one knew better than he that Danvers lacked the means of subsistence in such an establishment, and that all he possessed, including the price of his commission, would be insufficient to meet his present claim upon him. Consequently, having sucked the orange, he was content to throw away the rind.

Danvers and his captors were borne rapidly along, and soon reaching town, pierced its dense thoroughfares to that inner circle, which throbs in its mighty breast like a heart. The narrow streets were no longer thronged; only the straggling passengers of midnight, here hurrying along, here loitering in ribald fellowship, appeared at intervals on the pavement; the closed, silent houses seemed to share the sleep of their inhabitants; the churches stood up like sentinels, watching their slumbers; and high over all rose the towering form of St. Paul's, like a giant warder standing erect in the midst of his stronghold.

Keeping to the left of the sacred edifice, they passed down Aldersgate and the Barbican, and saw the lofty wall of the prison, with its coping of chevaux de frise, like an iron crown, loom dimly and gloomily up from behind the glimmering lamps. The cabriolet stopped at the frowning gate; and Todsby, who had taken the place of the groom on the footboard, alighted, and rang the bell. Its deep iron voice was heard to sound within, like the clang of fetters, but it elicited no response; and it was not till a third summons was rung forth that a man appeared at the wicket.

"What's the row now?" he demanded, in a surly voice.

"At the suit of Abrahams, Mr. Peach," replied Hawker, in his blandest tones.

"Then take him to the mart of Moses," replied the irate Peach. "Aint you ashamed to come kickin' up a rumpus here at this time o' night?"

"But if a fellow can't help his-self?" cried Todsby. "You know, if a gent won't come when he's wanted, you must get him when you can."

"Well, it aint no use to stand jawin' there. Bring him in."

"Come along, Captain," said Hawker.

Danvers, who seemed to have resigned himself to despair, but was moodily cogitating how to extricate himself from his difficulties, alighted without a word, and entering the prison, the door was locked and bolted behind him.

"Ugh! you *are* a swell!" exclaimed Mr. Peach, surveying his evening costume by the light of an adjacent burner. "Well, you must go in the receiving-ward for to-night, and to-morrow we'll berth you in No. 7. But I forgot! The receiving-ward's choke-full: you must go into 7 at once."

"Make the Captain snug, I beg," said Hawker. "Can I go to any attorney for you, Captain?"

"You'll oblige me most by going to the ——" and Danvers mentioned a personage quite as odious as an attorney.

Motioning the turnkey to proceed, he followed in silence down a corridor to an iron gate opening on a flight of stairs, which, where not inclosed between walls, were guarded by massive bars, rising to a flight above. Drawing back the gate, the turnkey held it open while Danvers, stepping before him, passed through, when he locked it within, and they ascended the stairs together. At the landing, the glimmer of the lantern showed two closed doors, and one of these the turnkey unlocked, disclosing a long dormitory, with a low ceiling, and broken up into compartments by partitions which did not rise so high. Each of these contained a bed, and was appropriated to a single prisoner.

"There's your crib," said the turnkey, pointing to a vacant compartment. And he made again for the door.

"You'll have the goodness to leave me a light," cried Danvers.

The turnkey's only reply was a stare of astonishment, when he disappeared with the lantern.

Two or three inmates of the dormitory had been aroused by the noise, but as the room was once more left in darkness, and the key was heard to turn in the lock, they again disposed themselves for sleep, without making any remark, except that a gentleman in the next compartment to Danvers murmured indistinctly—"a gudgeon."

Danvers threw himself on the bed, in that excess of lassitude and debility which is the result of mental as well as bodily prostration; and the reverie in which he plunged might, both in its depth and gloom, be indeed compared

to an abyss. A hundred plans for retrieving his fortunes, or, at least, for deferring the day of reckoning, suggested themselves to his mind—some desperate enough, but all marked by a shrewd cunning, in keeping with the oblique tendency of his character. Each, however, in its turn, was dismissed as impracticable, and he finally became convinced that his position was hopeless, and, so far as he at present saw, admitted of no relief

It may seem strange, but this conclusion, instead of making him more dejected, tended rather to reconcile him to the worst; for he sank into a sort of listless apathy, reckless of consequences. The overwrought brain was lulled, though not composed, and the inward commotion was still betrayed in his fitful and uneasy sleep.

His slumbers were interrupted by the sound of voices, and, opening his eyes, he found that it was broad day, and that the speakers stood at the entrance of his compartment, surveying him, as he lay extended in his clothes on the bed, with evident interest. But there was something in Danvers's face that repelled approach, and all quickly withdrew; nor was he again disturbed till, about eight o'clock, the prisoners, in accordance with the regulations of the gaol, were summoned to descend to the yard.

This was a large quadrangle, formed by the four sides of the prison, the windows of which looked into it. A close fence, about the height of a man, divided it into two unequal parts, the smaller appropriated to the prisoners supported by the public, and the other, to those who maintained themselves. Visitors were now admitted; and the scene, regarded by a stranger, was not without interest. Here was the heart-broken wife, come to soothe her captive husband, and pacing with him, now in silence, now in deep consultation, the narrow limits of the court; another strode up and down by himself, his hands thrust

in his pockets, and the hard lines of his face, his dogged brow, and evil glance, betraying the brand of Cain. In the figure stretched full-length on a bench, lazily smoking a pipe, one recognised the victim of apathy and indolence. Here was the vacant eye or downcast look of despondency; there, the hypochondriac, indicated by his restlessness and gestures, glared continually at the surrounding windows, as if their iron bars had really entered into his soul. In contrast with these, two or three prisoners were grouped together, chatting as cheerfully and gaily as if they were at liberty, while others were engaged purchasing scraps of meat and vegetables from vendors admitted at this hour.

All this was as nothing to Danvers; and as his captivity continued, and day succeeded day without bringing relief, his morose and sullen manner daily made him more shunned. But one morning his whole demeanour suddenly changed. In glancing over the newspaper, his eye was caught by a familiar name, and he read with avidity an account of the wreck of a small steamer, running between Naples and Sicily, which concluded with the following paragraph:—

"Among the passengers lost, we are concerned to include Mr. Seaford, only son of Sir Bernard Seaford, of Seaford Manor. The circumstances of his death are peculiarly distressing, as we but lately announced his approaching marriage with the heiress of a noble Sicilian family, and he was actually proceeding to Palermo to meet his bride, when his career was so abruptly terminated. It is with regret we add, that the melancholy intelligence having been incautiously communicated to Sir Bernard Seaford, whose health has for some time been very precarious, the shock brought on paralysis; and, at the hour of our going to press, there was little expectation of his recovery. Captain

Danvers, of the Guards, is, we believe, next in succession to the baronetcy."

Danvers threw down the paper with an exclamation of joy, and strode into the yard. For some time, he paced up and down with restless steps, unconscious that his excited manner attracted the observation of more than one eye, although, from the sinister repute he had acquired, no one ventured to approach him. At length he flung himself on a bench, drew forth his pipe, and plunged into a more pleasant reverie than he had for a long time indulged.

His reflections were interrupted by a short, thickset man, with strongly-marked Jewish features, who touched his hat as he accosted him.

"Captain, my dear Captain, this is a bad mistake—very bad," he cried.

"Mistake, you call it, eh?" answered Danvers—"when it was at your suit I was arrested."

"A mistake, I assure you, my dear Captain."

"And you have only just discovered it?"

"Well, say it's my fault, though I've been out of town a fortnight, or you shouldn't have remained here an hour. But you must now come directly to my house, and as soon as the formalities can be despatched, you shall be set at liberty."

"If you are in earnest, you can set me at liberty here, Mr. Abrahams, as well as at your own house. And to be short, I must be liberated at once—*now*, do you hear! or you'll suffer for it hereafter."

"Why, my dear Captain, how impatient you are. You know I'm anxious to do all I can for you—I always have been."

"Will you let me out, or not?" demanded Danvers, fiercely.

"To be sure, I will. But you're so impatient. You've heard, I see. *Is Sir Bernard dead?*"

The inquiry explained, in a word, the mystery of his appearance, of his civility, and his submission; and the prisoner's lip curled with malignant exultation as he penetrated his motives.

"You know he is," he replied.

"Well, I did hear it, I own," returned Abrahams, "but I wasn't sure of it. But I'll go and see about the formalities, and try if I can do the thing here. I only hope you'll think no more of this bad mistake, Captain—I mean Sir—"

"Sir Everard," said Danvers, deigning to smile.

"SIR EVERARD," returned Abrahams, hat in hand.

He walked quickly away, and in a few minutes Danvers learnt that he was free to depart. He followed his liberator through the gate, without looking round at the prisoners behind; and drew a deep breath as he gained the street.

"It's a new world," he exclaimed; "and I begin life anew."

CHAPTER IV.

WEDDING FAVOURS.

WHEN, on the night of the ball,—or, rather, the dawn of the following day,—Rosalie sought her pillow, it was not to sleep. With the splendours of Nampced House, her sordid aspirations were forgotten; and as she leant back in her carriage—as she gained the solitude of her own

chamber—the voice of nature, of young and truthful affection, once more raised itself in her heart. She recalled the scene in the garden with mingled feelings of pique, shame, misgiving, and hope. At one moment, she heard Danvers, in accents too well remembered, eloquently pleading his suit; at another, she saw him silent and indifferent, as her mother announced that a marriage contracted without her sanction would entail the forfeiture of her fortune. Triumph it was to Mrs. Addlefield to mark the effect of her communication, and to heighten it, by insidious allusions, by a few bitter words, rather than by a long lecture, to the betrayed and slighted Rosalie. The latter was indignant, angry, and abased: she beheld herself rejected by the man she loved, and mechanically turned to one who, himself honoured and courted, proclaimed her his choice. She looked upon it as revenge and revenge, to woman as to man, is sweet. For the moment, she was giddy, sparkling, gay. But now, when the fumes of the intoxicating draught had passed off, when she was alone with her thoughts—with her heart, now she felt the pang, sharper than a serpent's tooth, of disappointed love, and saw all nature dull, flat, stale, and unprofitable.

But what is the fault for which the warm advocacy woman's affection will not find an excuse? In the midst of her sad and sombre reflections, the thought flashed upon her, as lightning through clouds, that it was from no mercenary motive, but from consideration for her, that Danvers, with his limited means, shrank from making her his wife. This was balm to her wounded feelings, but the welcomed deception, if cherished for a while, could not be maintained; and as day followed day, and Danvers made no attempt to see her—which indeed his imprisonment, had he been ever so willing, would have prevented—

her pique, her anger, her exasperation revived, and she became eager to sacrifice herself, in order to mortify him.

Sir Blundell, actuated by a different impulse, was equally impatient, and the art of Mrs. Addlefield turned these favourable circumstances to such good account, that the usual legal preliminaries were rapidly despatched, and within a fortnight from the proposal, all was prepared for the wedding.

On the eventful morning, Rosalie was all animation—what bride is not?—and for the moment, her untrained mind was weaned from all but herself, her diamonds, her favours, and her own beauty. At last, the great work of preparation was completed, and the bride stood veiled—not, alas! with innocence.

Her maid was indulging in laudatory exclamations, when the door opened, admitting Eleanor, attired as bridesmaid.

"Oh! you are dressed?" cried the young girl, cheerfully. "I came up to see if I could assist you, though Mrs. Addlefield hardly seemed to wish it. You look charming, dear Rosalie—but—" and she lowered her voice —"I must not call you Rosalie *now*."

"What will you call me, then?" replied the bride, colouring, as she reflected that, with such a slight difference in their years, she was about to marry Eleanor's father; and the spirit her mother had sought to instil into her mind, to alienate her from her friend, already made itself felt.

"You tell me!"

"You had better judge for yourself. But I have no time to talk now. I'm late as it is."

And she swept out of the room, without inviting Eleanor to follow. The waiting-maid, a witness of her rudeness, and enjoying the humiliation of a superior,

turned round with a half smile, but it vanished as she confronted Eleanor, and saw, in her raised head and dilated form, the resentment of a ruling spirit.

The guests had begun to arrive, and soon assembled in Mrs. Addlefield's *recherché* drawing-room, which her art and taste, scarcely so correct as Sir Blundell's, had contrived, with but a limited command of space, to pack with the contents of a bazaar. The company comprised besides the hostess and the bridal pair, a Mr. Silverlock, the family lawyer and trustee, who was to give Rosalie away; Sir Blundell's partner, the redoubtable Mr. Moneypenny; Miss Agnes Curlew, a maiden lady, acknowledging the epoch of forty, and who, being romantically disposed, was rather disappointed that she was not to be bridesmaid, and still more that she was not to be bride. Two or three walking figures completed the party.

In the midst of a volley of greetings, Mr. Silverlock coughed.

"Are we all assembled, ma'am?" he asked of Mrs. Addlefield.

"Yes—all."

"Then, I think we had better proceed to—to business."

"Not to-day, if you please," cried Sir Blundell, in a flow of spirits. "There is a lady here who would rather proceed to church."

"He! he!" cried Miss Agnes Curlew, and the laugh went round. "How can you be so naughty, Sir Blundell?"

"Perhaps it is the desire of more than one lady," observed a young gentleman, Granby Faster by name, "though, par excellence, the wish of the principal."

"The *interest* of the principal you mean," observed Mr. Moneypenny.

"Very good, Moneypenny—in fact, very," cried Sir Blundell, laughing. "I must endeavour to make it her

interest. I shall try—I shall try," he added to Rosalie and Mrs. Addlefield.

"I'm sure you'll do all religion teaches," replied Mrs. Addlefield, with a serene smile.

Rosalie, soothed by the general good humour, turned to Eleanor, and, in compunction for her recent abruptness, held out her hand. The young girl pressed it in her own, but in silence, and not with her usual warm affection.

A *cortége* of sumptuous carriages, drawn by grays, conveyed the party to church, attracting thither a motley crowd of spectators, eager to catch a glimpse of the bride. Rosalie advanced up the aisle with the air of a queen. She took her place at the altar, received the ring, and answered the responses, as she was prompted by the clerk, in a voice of music. Her mind had banished all thought but of the present. Clothed in the rarest spoils of the loom, radiant with gems, and far more radiant in her own charms, she felt herself the observed of every eye, the envy of many, and the admiration of all. Darting a glance around, she almost wished that Danvers could be present to behold her triumph. Suddenly the colour forsook her cheek, her proud eye drooped, and with difficulty she repressed a cry. Danvers was indeed there!

"You must do me a favour, Sir Blundell," she said, recovering herself, as they proceeded to the vestry.

"What can you ask, that I will not grant?" replied the baronet; "only say what you wish."

"You see Mr. Danvers there. He is an old friend of mine, and I should like him to join us."

"I'll go and invite him myself—but no, I must not leave you. I'll send Moneypenny."

Danvers entered the vestry just as Rosalie inscribed her name in the registry.

"You have now put the seal on your happiness," he said, addressing her apart; "I wish you joy."

Rosalie smiled, but a close observer might have remarked that her lip quivered, and she did not look up.

"I'm sure," said Mrs. Addlefield, coming to her relief, "no one will be more sincere in good wishes than Captain Danvers."

"Or Sir Everard," replied Danvers.

"Sir Everard!"

"Have you not heard, then?"

"Heard what?" said Rosalie, breathlessly, yet with affected indifference.

"Of the death of Sir Bernard Seaford and his son, and my succession to the baronetcy and estates. But I must beg your pardon for mentioning deaths on such an occasion. I see it has rather discomposed you, Lady Haughton."

"Oh, dear, no!" answered Rosalie. "But this place is so oppressive. I shall be glad when it is all over. You will come and breakfast with us, will you not?" And her voice grew softer.

"I shall be most happy."

They were soon in the carriages, and, borne rapidly off, re-assembled at breakfast. Danvers brought an immense accession to the vivacity of the company, and, after a few moments of abstraction, Rosalie, as if influenced by his presence, became equally gay. But Eleanor thought her laugh assumed, forced, and unnatural.

"Dear Rosalie is so happy," observed Mrs. Addlefield to Sir Blundell: "it makes one happy to see her. Nothing could be more charming."

"In fact, nothing," replied the bridegroom. "And it does make one happy, my dear lady—it makes *me* happy. Moneypenny," he added, aloud, "you must follow my example."

"Yes, we should all follow suit," said Granby Faster to Agnes Curlew.

"Oh!" exclaimed Agnes, clasping her hands.

"Repeal the currency laws," said Moneypenny, "and everybody may get married, because everybody will be rich. The true philosopher's stone is—PAPER! and the only question is, what shall we do with our gold when it becomes a drug."

Faster thought he would dose his tailor with it, as no drug, he felt assured, would operate on that individual with such a soothing effect.

"Then you would have no settlements," said the lawyer, alarmed.

"And I'm sure the ladies will protest against that," observed Danvers, glancing at Mrs. Addlefield and Rosalie.

"On the contrary," replied Mrs. Addlefield, "if the world would only agree, I should wish, for my part, to dispense with settlements. I hate everything mercenary, and particularly in connection with marriage."

Mr. Silverlock, who had been instructed to be particularly tight with Sir Blundell in respect to the settlement on Rosalie, here opened his eyes.

"Ah! I knew what would be *your* sentiments," replied Danvers to Mrs. Addlefield, "with your exalted ideas! And, after all, this is only natural, Lady Haughton—love in a cottage, though we don't object to a mansion."

"But which do you think preferable?"

"I don't pretend to judge. Pray let us have your few."

"I should like to hear yours."

"Well, you know the old proverb about cottages—that a certain personage comes in at the door, and turns love out of the window. This has no doubt made ladies super-

stitious; for I observe they always take refuge—when they can—in a palace."

"Are you not too severe?" said Rosalie, in a low tone.

"What is your own opinion?"

Rosalie sighed, and was silent.

"I think," remarked Miss Agnes Curlew to her neighbour, "marriages may be happy anywhere, if they are contracted at a proper age. I dare say you would hardly guess *my* age?"

"Perhaps not exactly."

"He! he! now I begin to think you could."

"Oh, no!"

"You must try."

Mr. Granby Faster was embarrassed. That the age of Agnes, indeed, was forty-eight, he could see at a glance, but to utter this bitter truth would, he felt, be treason.

"Come," said Agnes, "what do you think?"

"Well, about thirty."

"He! he! no, I'm forty."

"Impossible!"

"I am indeed."

"You say nothing," said Mrs. Addlefield to Eleanor; "but perhaps you observe much."

Eleanor coloured; for her eyes had been fixed on Rosalie and Danvers.

"I was thinking of papa," she replied, with some coldness. "Ah! he is going!"

The company, observing the movement, all rose; and gathered round the bride and bridegroom. Eleanor could not restrain her emotions, and clung to her father's arm.

"Will you leave me, dear papa?" she said, in a whisper. "Will you forget me?"

"Never, my child," replied Sir Blundell, tenderly.

"We shall be back, you know, in a fortnight; and then we can all be happy together."

"Happy!" murmured Eleanor, drooping her head. "But here is—LADY HAUGHTON!"

"Good bye, Eleanor," cried Rosalie.

"You embrace *her*," said Danvers, apart; "and I, who should have borne you off as my bride, must be content to take your hand."

"Take it, then," replied Rosalie, in a tremulous voice. And she dropped a ring in his open palm. Adroitly as it was done, Eleanor, who was unconsciously watching them, observed it; but she could hardly credit the fact, till, a moment afterwards, she saw Danvers adjusting the ring on his finger. Then the bride and bridegroom had gone.

CHAPTER V.

AN INTRUDER.

WHAT Mr. Abrahams called the "formalities," exacted by the stern hand of the law, withheld from Danvers for several days the possession of the town residence of the deceased Sir Bernard Seaford, and his new state spurning the vulgar seclusion of his ancient lodgings, he located himself at one of those luxurious caravansaries, which combine the comfort and appearance of a private dwelling with the boundless resources of an hotel.

He was seated in a sumptuous drawing-room, lounging over that same journal which had brought such good tidings to his prison, but which now, instead of being redo-

lent with the fumes of tobacco, came to him fresh from the press, and was perused at breakfast.

He was interrupted by a servant, who announced that a person named Hawker wished to speak to him.

"I know no one of that name," he replied. "What does he want?"

"Shall I inquire, sir?"

"No, never mind," answered Danvers, suddenly recollecting the aide-de-camp of Abrahams. "Let him come up."

The sheriff's myrmidon made his appearance, smirking in a way that Danvers could not account for.

"Well, sir," said Danvers, coldly, "what have you to say?"

Hawker looked round the room, as if to make sure they were alone.

"Are we Tommy all alone, baronet?" he said, putting the tip of his finger on his nose.

"The fellow's mad!" exclaimed Danvers.

"Don't you believe it, baronet," resumed Hawker. "I'm too wido to go mad. But what I've got to say is a secret, and one you wouldn't like everybody to hear."

"You're infernally impertinent. If you have any message from your master, speak out, and be brief, or I'll send you away quicker than you came."

"I'm sure you won't do anything of the sort, baronet —especially as what I've got to say isn't on the hook of Abrahams, but on my own and yours. To come to the point, I want to tell you there's another heir to Sir Bernard Seaford, besides yourself; and though nobody can say you're not the right baronet, *she*—that's the other—can claim the estates."

"And you've come to me with this fine story to extort money, have you?" demanded Danvers, sternly, though his cheek paled, and his lip turned livid.

"That's just it!"

"You're a cool vagabond, certainly."

"Well, I've got as much cheek as most people, I can't deny," rejoined the other, composedly. "But to go on with my story, have you ever heard of the name of Hargrave, baronet?"

Danvers's brow grew darker.

"Because, if you haven't," pursued Hawker, "I have, and I'll tell you how it happened. Before I came to London, I was clerk to a lawyer in the country, and a famous man in his way was Lawyer Smart. Ah! you've heard of *him*, I see, baronet. He was always pretty well employed at Seaford Manor; and through him I got to know a good deal about the family pedigree. It's a curious one, as you know, baronet; and as I've an uncommon fancy for finding out heirs-at-law and next of kin, I took to the thing kindly, and I discovered that, supposing Sir Bernard and his son kicked, without leaving issue, the next heirs were the representatives of Sir Bernard's cousin, one Hugh Seaford."

"And I am the grandson of Hugh Seaford," said Danvers, with an air of triumph.

"Which nobody can deny," returned Hawker. "You're the son of his younger daughter, Cicely, who married Lionel Danvers, Esq. But maybe you don't know what became of his *elder* daughter, Lettice?"

"I don't know why I refrain from kicking you down stairs, or sending for a policeman to take you into custody," said Danvers, with affected nonchalance. "But since I've allowed you to talk to me on this subject, we'll now settle it. Lettice Seaford married and died, leaving no children."

"That's where you're out, baronet! Now I'll tell you how it was, and you won't kick me down stairs, I know.

Lettice fell in love, as they call it, with a poor parson, who was curate of the parish; but her father, though he was poor enough himself, was as proud as a duke, and when he found she'd married the curate, he turned her out of doors. Serve her right, you'll say; and I'm not going to contradict you. But, to cut it short, Lettice and her husband went to Wales, and there they had a daughter, who grew up, and followed her mother's example, by making a poor match, and marrying a clerk—not a parish clerk, however, but a merchant's. Well, it seems she and her mate couldn't make a do of it: so they went to America, and there she died."

"And that's all you've to say, is it?" said Danvers, breathing more freely.

"Mum!" replied Hawker, with a familiar wink. "I'm only just coming to it. This woman, like her mother, left issue a daughter, who, at her death, returned with her father to England; and I know where to lay my finger on them both at this moment."

Danvers looked at the speaker long and hard, as if he were searching his heart; and, divining the purpose of his scrutiny, Hawker met it boldly. Gradually the features of both relaxed, acquiring something of the same expression, like men who had come to a secret understanding, needing no further explanation.

"And so this man believes his daughter to be the representative of the elder daughter of Hugh Seaford, and, consequently, heir to the Seaford estates?" said Danvers, at length breaking silence.

"I don't believe he's got the least scent of it, and as I've been on this case a good while, I ought to know. To tell you the truth, baronet, I've made a study of that man. P'raps it comes natural to him, p'raps it's because he's been in America, but he's an out-an-out radical, one of the

Chartists; and being rather in that line myself—as, of course, every poor man is—I've met him constantly; and, whenever we've been together, I've took soundings—cautious, but steady. My opinion is, that nobody who thought he would ever come in for any money would run on against the rich as that man does; and as for lords and baronets, you'd think he'd rather be hung than speak to one."

"Have you ever seen the girl?" said Danvers.

"Well, I've seen her, and that's all."

"What is her age?"

"About fifteen, p'raps."

"And her father a Chartist!" said Danvers, musingly, "exposing her at that tender age to the corrupting influence of his vile associates. But it may be possible to rescue her from his hands, without letting him suspect she has any connection with the Seafords—which I distinctly deny. And it is only on the understanding that such pretensions are never again mooted, that I can consent to provide for her, and to reward you."

"Of course, I'm willing to do anything that's agreeable, baronet," said Hawker, submissively.

"In that case," pursued Danvers, speaking slowly and deliberately, "the matter becomes very simple, because, if this man entertains these extreme opinions, he may be led, either by his own inclination, or at the instigation of one of his associates"—and he laid particular emphasis on these words—"into a conspiracy against the Government, and, in the present excited state of the country, he would, on conviction, assuredly be transported. I know nothing of him; but from your account, he appears to be a most dangerous character, and I would willingly give a thousand pounds to insure the conviction of such a firebrand."

"A thousand pounds!" murmured Hawker. "I tell

you what, baronet! that man's goose is cooked. I mean, I'll keep a watch on him; and if I find he's up to mischief—which I'm sure he is—I'll peach."

"You seem an honest fellow," said Danvers. "Take this, as an earnest of what I shall do for you hereafter." And he handed him a bank-note for fifty pounds.

"Baronet, you're a prince," said Hawker, his eyes glistening. "Now I'm off." And with a grin and a nod he vanished from the room.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CHARTIST AND HIS DAUGHTER.

Amy Brookman, the young girl mentioned by Hawker in his interview with Danvers, lived with her father in a small house at Kennington. Mr. Brookman was a confidential clerk in the bank of Sir Blundell Haughton, Moneypenny, and Co.; and Harold Arkworth, employed in the same establishment, had, by a natural arrangement, taken up his quarters in Brookman's house, soon after his first introduction to the bank, and had gradually come to be regarded as one of the family. A servant-of-all-work, yclept Lucy Flight, completed the household.

Brookman was seated with Amy in their little parlour, at a table spread with that simple meal which, to persons of their class, is the solace of the day; and as Amy sipped her tea, she stole every now and then a covert look at her father, who, forgetful of their repast, was bending intently over a newspaper, at that time esteemed a great luminary

in the Chartist world, and bearing the designation of the *North Star*. The light of the lamp, falling full upon him, enabled her to discern clearly the stern expression of his face, an expression which seemed habitual to his compressed lips, and broad, massive, and somewhat menacing brow, spread beneath his failing hair like a plate of iron. It contrasted forcibly with the patient, submissive look on the soft, mild, blooming features of the young girl, a look that strangely mingled the freshness of childhood with the staid gravity of maturer years; and yet the expression on either face was indicative of power—in the one of action, in the other of endurance. They possessed, too, points of similitude, such as one might expect to discover between father and daughter; but the countenance of Amy bore a still more striking resemblance to an ancient portrait over the mantelpiece, representing, in colours gloomy with age, the head and bust of a man in the prime of life, dressed in the heavy costume of the reign of our second George, and having all the appearance of a person of superior rank.

Brookman threw down the paper with an impatient exclamation, drank off his tea, and stood up.

"Are you going out, father?" asked Amy, anxiously.

"Yes," replied Brookman—and his gloomy brow cleared as he laid his large hand caressingly on her head. "But you needn't mope by yourself, Amy. You can have Lucy to sit with you till Harold comes home."

"Will Harold be late?" said Amy, with a quick look up.

"I can't answer for Harold. He's a little hairbrained just now, and not quite accountable for himself. But, you know, he's never late."

"But he's out every night now," said Amy, dropping her eyes.

"Ay, ay; we're all foolish once in our lives. But it will wear off—it will wear off."

He turned to the sideboard, and took up a small packet of papers, while Amy, never raising her eyes, remained standing at the table, as if still pondering over his remark. But, as he moved towards the door, she glided after him, and laid her hand gently on his arm.

"Father!" she said, earnestly: "I'm so uneasy about you."

"About me, Amy!" replied Brookman, his hard features relaxing into a sort of smile.

"Yes; Lucy says every one is talking of the Chartists now, and particularly of the Convention; and the report is, they're trying to get up a revolution."

"Some may be, but I'm not one of them. You know I'm for moral force—not for fighting and bloodshed; though, if ever there were a time for such a struggle, it would be now, when Europe is in flames, and when, everywhere but here, tyrants are overthrown and oligarchies destroyed, and the majesty of the people vindicated. But let us have no revolution here, except such as we can make by the power of reason and the force of truth. Then we shall have God on our side, and kings and rulers will come to understand that He is with the poor, and will do right for them who suffer wrong."

"I knew—I was sure, you wouldn't be for bloodshed," said Amy; "but Lucy brought me such rumours, I couldn't help being frightened."

At this juncture Lucy herself appeared, quite throwing Amy into the shade by her ribbons, and, above all, by her janty little cap, hanging loosely on the back of her head, no one could tell how. As she entered, her finger was pressed to her lips, and she gave utterance to a prolonged "hish!" which, though indicating a necessity for silence, might easily have been heard in the street.

"What is the matter, Lucy? what can it be?" cried Amy, in alarm.

Lucy pointed significantly towards the window, then at Brookman, and then at the window again.

"The girl's crazed," said Brookman, impatiently, as he flung towards the door. But Lucy threw herself before him.

"Don't you! don't you, sir!" she said, imploringly.

"What *do* you mean?" cried Brookman.

"It's the 'tective, sir," answered Lucy, below her breath. "He's been sneakin' about all day, keepin' such a watch on the house; I wonder he ain't ashamed of hisself. I took a jug, and made believe to go for some beer, so as I might have a good view of him; and he comes up like the pleicemans always do, and says, 'Have you got a drop to spare, my dear?' Like his impudence! He went off then, but now he's come back. I know he's a 'tective."

"And watching this house!" exclaimed Brookman.

And, snatching up his hat, he darted to the door, before Amy, who was greatly alarmed, could interpose. Lucy followed him, though not till she had relieved her feelings by a scream.

"There's no one here," cried Brookman, as he gained the door, and glanced up and down the street. "No, no! we can hardly have come to that yet!"

And he passed out, closing the door behind him.

"Well, I'm sure he was a 'tective, Miss Amy, whatever master thinks," said Lucy, returning to the parlour; "but, most likely, he suspected I was coming to tell master—for I do believe 'tectives see everything—and so he took hisself off. You can't be up to the 'tectives, Miss Amy, no how; and if I hadn't heard talk about the Chartists, and what they're goin' to do, and knowin' master was one of the tip-toppers, I'd never have misdoubted the man, he does it so natural."

"I hope you're mistaken, Lucy," replied Amy, "though I must own it has startled me."

"Lor, Miss Amy! there ain't nothin' to be startled about, if it comes to that. Suppose it was a 'tective—what can he do to master, so long as master don't do nothin' hisself—which, of course, he won't? It's just my dream out, that I had last night, of a great black cat; and I looked in the *Dream Book*, and found the cat was an enemy—that's the 'tective; and then, in jumped a spaniel, and he gave the cat such a tuzzlin'; and my belief is, that spaniel was Mr. Arkworth." Here there was a knock at the door. "Oh, gracious!" continued Lucy. "Talk of the——. But I'm very glad he's come!"

It was, as she expected, Harold, who, on entering, looked very pale and dejected.

"How tired you seem, Harold!" said Amy, meeting him on the threshold, and eagerly accepting his hand. "But I mustn't scold you, as you've come home so early. You'll take tea now, won't you?"

"No, thank you, Amy," replied Harold, with a smile that, though full of kindness, was evidently forced. And he drew a chair to the fire, and sat very quiet, gazing at the glowing coals; while Lucy, by Amy's direction, removed the tea-things, and then withdrew, leaving the young friends together.

Amy, who could never be idle, had taken up some work; but those deep, thoughtful eyes, which had lately been bent so earnestly on her father, now wandered more than once to Harold, with an expression different indeed, but equally affectionate. At length Harold arose, took a desk from the sideboard, placed it on the table, and sat down to write. But the muse would not be invoked; and, after labouring some time with little effect, he seemed to relinquish the attempt, abandoning himself to his thoughts.

"You don't get on, Harold," said Amy, breaking silence.

"No," replied Harold, "I can't bend my mind to it, do all I can."

"You're not well, I'm sure. You're so changed from what you were."

"'Do you think so, Amy?"

"Oh, yes! You must know it yourself. I've noticed it ever since you first went to visit at Sir Blundell's. You were quite different before, and we were so happy. You could talk to me then, Harold, and tell me about your play, and sometimes let me read it as you wrote. But now you scarcely ever speak to me, or to any one else." And Amy pouted her lips, and looked very much offended.

"Can I have been so inconsiderate?" replied Harold. "But you are changed, too, Amy, and I declare it makes me feel quite a patriarch, when I see you, whom I have known only as the best little girl in the world, looking so staid and matronly."

"That isn't it," said Amy, no way mollified.

"Then, *what* is it?"

Amy looked as if she knew.

"You want to fall out with me," resumed Harold, reproachfully.

"No, I don't, if you'll be pleasant and cheerful, as you used to be, and not sit for an hour together, and never speak. I didn't mind it when you were composing, because I thought you were bringing forward your talents, and what you wrote would be printed and read and admired. But now you never do anything! You know Harold, you hardly ever come home till bed-time; and even when you do, you neither write nor talk—do you, Harold?"

"But *you* talk, Amy—talk with a judgment that should

make me feel ashamed," replied the young man, while his face kindled. "What you say, reminds me I must look to my own exertions for advancement; and strive with fortune, not submit to it. I was discouraged and daunted; but I learn from you, so much younger than myself—"

"Only six years," interpellated Amy.

"Six! am I so much older, while you are so much wiser. Well, we won't discuss the point, Amy. You have aroused me, and, to show I intend to turn over a new leaf, I'll begin this very moment."

Amy smiled, but said nothing, as if resolved not to interfere with so good a resolution; and Harold, resuming his pen, bent himself to the pleasant labour of composition with renewed ardour and diligence. After a time, he was interrupted by a knock at the door, announcing the return of Brookman.

"At work!" cried the Chartist, on entering, leaning, as he spoke, on Harold's shoulder. "That's right! In that pen you have power, and power is better than wealth, and sweeter"—here he dropped his voice—"than love. But, Amy! are you up yet? To bed, you rake! to bed!"

"I couldn't go till you returned, father," replied Amy; "but now I see you safe at home, I shall say good night." And she kissed his cheek. "Good night, Harold. Mind you don't work too late!"

"I shall lose my inspiration now you are going," said Harold, as he opened the door for her: "so I shan't write any longer. Good night, Amy!"

He held the door open till she disappeared on the stairs, and then returned to his seat.

"So you're going back to your old habits, Harry," said Brookman. "You do well. It's better than love-making, particularly as you are so punctilious."

"You still blame me, then?"

"Blame is a hard word, but I refuse to allow your scruples. You love this girl—love her, I believe, with all your heart. Then, why shouldn't you tell her so? Arn't you as good as she, or is she made of a finer kind of clay?"

"I could almost think she was."

"Of course, as a lover; but what as a man, Harry? Depend upon it, we're all alike—too much so!—only the poor, on the whole, are more virtuous than the rich. But we needn't talk of it now, since you've given up the chase."

"Never will I give it up!"

"Then, what will you do?—continue all this foolery, running over to Kensington every night, on the mere chance of seeing her step into her carriage, without being observed yourself, and jumping at every invitation from Dives, who thinks you go for the crumbs under his table? Psha! I thought you were more of a man, Harry!"

"Sir Blundell has invited me for to-morrow, and I have engaged to go, but it is for the last time. I have discovered *she* is unhappy—who was ever otherwise with a step-mother!—and this has fired me to try, by exerting every faculty of my mind, to advance myself in life, that I may be able one day to tell her of my love without presumption, even if it is without hope."

"Now you're on the right track. Go to the rich man's to-morrow; and the next night, come with me to the Convention. It will be a closed meeting, except to the members' friends; and as you're to be a man of the pen, you should be there. You'll find it a scene to study."

"Then I will go. Now good night!"

And they rose together.

CHAPTER VII.

STEP-MOTHER'S LOVE.

"You've spoiled her, Rosalie," said Mrs. Addlefield to Lady Haughton, as they sat together in an elegant boudoir at Nampced House, where Mrs. Addlefield, perhaps from unwillingness to part with her daughter, seemed to be on a perpetual visit. "You've been too indulgent from the first."

"Haven't you been too severe?" replied Rosalie.

"I'm surprised you can make such an observation. It's not in my nature, I believe, to be severe upon any one—quite the reverse. I've too just a sense of religion. But you are very ready to form a bad opinion of me, while you blind yourself to every fault in Eleanor."

"Not at all. I want to find faults in her, but can't. She's so prudent, so submissive, though to me there's a sort of insolence in her submission. I declare I've got quite to hate her."

"Then, why don't you get rid of her? She might be driven to elope with that young Arkworth, who I am sure is desperately smitten with her; and then she'd be cast off by Sir Blundell, and you'd have nothing more to fear from her."

"Fear, indeed!" exclaimed Rosalie, colouring. But she evinced no surprise at the perfidious suggestions of her mother, who, indeed, was accustomed, in their private consultations, to expose to her the sinister workings of her mind, without disguise and without reserve.

"One may always fear a spy," said Mrs. Addlefield, with emphasis.

Again Rosalie coloured, and the blushes spread over her face and neck.

"It's not that you do anything you need care about," pursued Mrs. Addlefield, keeping her eyes down that Rosalie might recover herself; "but things may be so misrepresented and distorted as to seem quite different from what they are; and, you know, one can't refute what is said behind one's back. In my opinion, spies and tattlers are odious."

"If I thought she tattled about me!—but how can she, when Sir Blundell has become so cool to her?"

"Thanks to your following my counsel! Continue to do so, and you'll foil her. But that girl is very deep, and you will never know peace while she remains under your roof!"

Rosalie's reply, if she intended to speak, was arrested by the entrance of a servant, who announced that Sir Everard Danvers had called, and wished to see her. Rosalie carefully surveyed herself before she moved towards the door, and, as she was passing out, her ear caught a parting admonition from Mrs. Addlefield to "*beware of the spy.*"

Danvers, who appreciated dress without running into extremes, was admiring his boots as Rosalie entered, and did not immediately look up.

"Your thoughts seem deeply engaged," said Rosalie, a little piqued. "Is it usual for Sir Everard Danvers to be so abstracted?"

"Whenever he thinks of you, it is!" replied the baronet, bending low, and then seating her at his side.

"For that speech I suppose I must forgive you, though

you know you don't deserve it. You promised to come to my box at the Opera last night, and never made your appearance."

"And deucedly vexed I was that it happened so. But I had a previous engagement at Lady Fairlee's, and couldn't get away."

"Lady Fairlee's again! Why, you're always there. You must find something very attractive in that quarter."—And her eye rested on his face.

"Nothing extraordinary. Sophy's a pretty girl, but she's rather flat."

"I should say she was indeed—flat as paper."

"No, no, not so bad, either. She has spirit, and even wit, but she wants so much drawing out."

"Poor thing! But, of course, you undertake that interesting process? Oh, yes! or how could you know its effect?"

"Now don't be spiteful, Lady Haughton."

"Spiteful!"

"Yes."

"Upon my word, you're very complimentary. But I can't wonder at your using such language to me, when you're so interested about Sophy Fairlee. You consider her pretty too?"

"Decidedly."

"Then I can't admire your taste—your *beau ideal*, that's all!"

"Who said she was my beau ideal?"

"Yourself, didn't you? you seem dreadfully charmed with her."

"There's only one woman by whom I have ever been charmed, and she, as you know, jilted me."

"It's very well to say that," replied Rosalie, playing with her gold chain in a nervous way.

"Is it not true? You know how I loved, how I adored you; and yet—"

"It's too late to tell me this now," cried Rosalie, agitatedly. "I am a wife, Sir Everard Danvers!."

"A wife! you think I need to be reminded of it; that I can forget you are gone, forget the love you cast away, the life you have ignored. You see this ring, which you gave me on the day of your marriage. I wear it, that I may remember, whenever I look at my hand, what you have placed between us. I forgive what is past, Rosalie; but forget—never!"

"You *do* forgive!" said Rosalie, holding out her hand, while she shaded her eyes with the other.

"Fully, freely!" exclaimed Danvers, clasping her taper fingers.

Rosalie looked up with a startled glance, as a low exclamation came from the other end of the room, and saw Eleanor, more agitated than herself, standing in the open French window which led to the terrace; but before Rosalie could speak, she drew back, and disappeared.

"How provoking!" exclaimed Rosalie. "That girl is always watching me!"

"Egad! it *is* awkward," said Danvers. "But I must make love to her, and conciliate her in that way."

"You'll do no such thing," cried Rosalie, her eyes flashing. "I won't permit it, nor hear of it."

"Well, I'd better go now, at any rate," replied Danvers.

"You'll be here this evening, I presume. Sir Blundell expects you to dinner."

"And do you?"

"As he does, I do."

"Then, I'll come." And he sauntered out of the room, twirling his whip as he went.

Yielding to an innate impulse, Rosalie was following him to the door, but, as if recollecting herself, suddenly paused, remaining in the middle of the apartment. Her situation, indeed, was embarrassing, and, in some respects, not undeserving of pity. Here was the man she loved, for whom she had been willing to make every sacrifice, separated from her by an impassable gulf, yet besieging her with attentions, dexterously blended with little provocations to pique and jealousy, and all the finesse of a practised intriguer. She was at the period of life when the heart is most prone to err and to rule; and her flexible mind, uninitiated in self-discipline, was void of all tutelary principles. Nothing restrained her from evil but a sort of instinct, which showed that her disposition, had it been fostered and developed, was naturally good; but, as if jealous of even this safeguard, her mother eagerly encouraged her predilection for Danvers, seeing in its continuance a means of maintaining her own ascendancy. But the mechanism of our nature is so delicate, so intricate, that we cannot, if we would, unhinge one spring, without deranging the whole; and the poison of a guilty thought spreads itself through the system, corrupting every part. Selfish, sordid, vindictive, Mrs. Addlefield, from mere habit, sought to make her daughter the same; and every day the effect of her training became more apparent. Rosalie was now convinced that she had a secret enemy in Eleanor, and, prompted by her mother, lost no opportunity, when she could do so safely, of mortifying and humbling the young girl. These slights were often offered in the presence of servants, and sometimes even of visitors; and the high-spirited Eleanor, accustomed to be mistress of her father's house, and to the enjoyment of uncontrolled freedom, suddenly found herself subjected to an arbitrary authority, exercised by a stranger and intruder, who,

though scarcely two years her senior, claimed to rule all her actions.

At this moment Rosalie was incensed against Eleanor to the last degree; for though, through the subtle suggestions of her mother, she was persuaded before that Eleanor suspected her attachment to Danvers, she could not conceal from herself that the young girl had now, in appearances, reason to foster her suspicions. Eleanor's exclamation, so low, yet so distinct, still rang in her ear, and still flushed her cheek with anger and shame. But that shame, though associated with hate, seemed to raise her from the slough in which she had been sinking, to kindle in her bosom a sense of self-respect, and, thus influenced, she resolved to be more guarded in her intercourse with Danvers, and never again be entangled in such a situation. But for Eleanor she reserved all her spleen and all her resentment.

They met on assembling for dinner. Rosalie, though affecting a careless air, felt her face burn as Eleanor, who made her appearance rather late, entered the ante-room, and she stole an uneasy glance at her step-daughter, who, on her part, seemed studiously to avoid her eye. To increase her chagrin, Sir Blundell gave Eleanor in charge to Danvers, and they sat at the opposite end of the table, where she could not interpose.

There was a cold reserve in Eleanor's manner that piqued and stimulated Danvers, and, like a skilled angler, he tried, now by one lure, now by another, to draw her from it.

"Were you at the Opera last night?" he asked.

"Yes," was the curt reply.

"What did you think of the fair Swede?"

"I thought only of her."

"But she is very plain."

"Indeed."

"Do you not think so? The ladies have all been consoling themselves for the unapproachable sweetness of her voice, by denying her beauty."

"I'm sorry for it."

"That she is not beautiful?"

"No."

"What then?"

"That people should make such malicious remarks."

Danvers was not easily repelled, but there was a gravity, a decision, in Eleanor's tone, that, coupled with the reminiscence of the morning, might, perhaps, have discouraged him, if he had not been fascinated by her beauty. His quick glance soon discerned that her thoughts were not with the present, and observed her eye wander frequently to her father with a look of inexpressible solicitude and tenderness. But such was the power Danvers could exert, that, in spite of herself, she was drawn into conversation, and felt him exercising a spell over her, though she trembled in his toils, as a bird in the snare of the fowler.

Harold, to his great annoyance, had, on the announcement of dinner, been paired off with Miss Agnes Curlew, the elderly maiden owning to forty; and, himself separated from Eleanor, was alarmed at the seeming progress of Danvers.

"How grave Eleanor looks to-night!" said the fair Agnes, who never shrank from the barbarism of criticising the company. "It really adds two or three years to her age—don't you think so?"

"Oh dear, no!" replied Harold.

"Well, now, to me she appears to be quite as old as Lady Haughton. But then they say *she* is only twenty."

"I should not have thought her so old."

"You *are* polite—very, really—he! he! Now how

old should you consider me?—older tahn I am, I dare say! But"—and she spoke truly—"*I'm not.*"

"I should not suppose it for a moment," protested Harold.

"Should you think me forty?"

"I could never believe it," said Harold, knowing the Cape had long since been passed.

"He! he! well, I am, I assure you—I am indeed."

Harold was too complaisant to contest the point, and, indeed, Agnes did not dwell upon it, but glided on to a computation of the age of each of the company, rating it, in every instance, several years in advance, and concluding by a guess at Harold's, which she politely calculated on the same liberal scale.

When the ladies withdrew, Eleanor, who had with difficulty supported the constraint of dinner, was slipping away to her own chamber, but was seized by Agnes, and obliged to accompany her to the drawing-room. Here the elderly maiden repeated the computation she had confided to Harold, and as it called for no answer, Eleanor tacitly submitted to the infliction, her thoughts being really bent on other things.

Lady Haughton still watched her incessantly, if covertly, divining, in some measure, what those thoughts were.

"That girl is sulking to-night," said Mrs. Addlefield, coming up to her as she was contemplating Eleanor. "Why do you permit it?"

"How can I prevent it?" replied Rosalie, tartly.

"By exercising your authority. The will is the way."

"I'll complain of her to Sir Blundell," said Rosalie, seeing the gentlemen enter the room.

Eleanor, unconscious that she was the subject of remark, took her place at the tea-table, at which she was ac-

customed to preside; and the first to solicit her services was Harold.

"I have to thank you, Mr. Arkworth, for the little song you sent me," she said, as she presented him a cup of tea. "It's the first you have published, is it not?"

"Yes; and this it was not my intention to publish; but a friend, who is a composer, saw it in manuscript, and having set it to music, easily overruled my objections."

"I am glad he did; for both the words and air are striking."

"You have tried it, then?" said Harold, acknowledging the compliment, while his face flushed with pleasure.

"Oh, yes! and like it exceedingly."

"You are very kind to give it so much attention, when both its author and composer are unknown."

"Is it only among those who are known, then, we are to look for merit?"

"I could not for a moment think so. On the contrary, one may feel an additional pleasure in the merits of a composition from being one's self their discoverer."

"That is a sentiment worthy of a man of letters, and prophetic of your destiny. I think you will succeed."

"In what?"

"In literature."

"You don't know how your words encourage me!"

Eleanor, touched by his earnestness, seemed for a moment to throw off her abstraction, and, raising her soft eyes, watched the changing expression of his face with a look of interest.

"I think we all have a destiny to work out, if we will undertake it," she said; "yes, even we women! Why should we, any more than men, shrink from the struggle? The great highway of the world is open to all."

Before Harold could reply, they were joined by Danvers.

"I've come to you, not for tea, but to ask you for some music," he said to Eleanor.

"You must really excuse me this evening," replied Eleanor.

"And why?" demanded Rosalie, coming up at this moment. "If you're too ill to make yourself agreeable, you should keep your own room."

Eleanor turned round with a flushed brow, and her eye fell on her father.

"Sing, Elly," murmured Sir Blundell. "It would be disagreeable—that is, it wouldn't be good taste to refuse."

Eleanor, without making a reply, placed her hand on his arm, and he led her to the pianoforte.

"Stay by me, papa," she said, as she sat down; "and think I address my song to you."

And running her thin white fingers over the instrument, as a bard might sweep his lyre, her voice poured forth, in a flood of mellifluous tones, the song she had that day received from Harold.

Song.

Love lies deep within my heart,
  Deeper than my tongue can tell—
  Like a spring beneath a well!
And thy looks its tone impart,
Now of hope, or joy, or smart,
As if shadows o'er it pass'd,
And distinct reflections cast!

Let thy lips or praise or blame,
  Be it weal or be it woe,
  Still, for ever, 'twill be so!
Ever and for aye the same,
An unseen but living flame,
In my soul will centred be,
Beaming earnest love for thee!

A round of applause burst from the company as the cadences of the singer—now so thrilling, now so inexpressibly soft and tender—suddenly ceased, and every heart was touched by the exquisite pathos of her voice. But if others were affected, what were the feelings of the author, the poet, the lover? For a moment Harold stood entranced; then, recovering himself, he was hastening to express his acknowledgments to Eleanor, but perceived she had left the room.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE GREAT VENTURE.

It was to the solitude of her own chamber that Eleanor retired, burning with resentment at the affront she had sustained, yet with a high purpose, over which she had long been brooding, kernelled and sealed in her heart. If she had had any hesitation before, her last scruple was now dismissed. A horrible suspicion of Rosalie's rectitude had taken possession of her mind; she could not communicate it to her father, and she seemed, by her silence and presence, to share her dereliction—to lend it, if not sanction, at least connivance. In any case, she would have chafed under an authority strained to its utmost, though, as a point of duty, she would have rendered it obedience; but to submit to oppression from a source she must despise, on the ground both of affection and principle, would be abject and degrading. At an age when romance exercises a dangerous influence over our actions, and endowed with

feelings deep, strong, and fervid, but curbed by her over-ruling will, she persuaded herself she was at liberty to throw off this yoke, and seek an escape from it amidst the busy struggles of the world. Those accomplishments she had cultivated for amusement, or as mental embellishments, she would now turn to better account, by making them the means of obtaining a livelihood; and she had a hopeful confidence in her resolution and ability to achieve that object. With so little experience of life, with so sanguine a temperament, she yet conceived her plans in a moderate and sensible spirit, expecting difficulties, even while she anticipated success. The great leap was the first—flight from her home, abandonment of her father. This was the chasm at which she had paused. But a chafed spirit, pride, and self-respect, wounded in every sensibility, with the impulse of her strong will, would not be arrested; and the more she reflected, the more her purpose was confirmed.

After a sleepless night, she arose with the dawn, and hastily dressed herself. Then, taking up a bandbox, containing her little wardrobe, she glided from the chamber. None of the inmates of the house were as yet astir. She crept down the passage, and, with noiseless steps, reached the door of her father's room. Pale, drooping, there was still nothing of doubt in her bent head and downcast eyes. After a moment's pause, she knelt down, and, with raised hands, offered up a silent prayer—a prayer, indeed, that could find no voice, except in the deepest feelings of the soul. There was a tear in her eye as she rose, and descending the polished stairs, made her way the hall, and quitted her paternal roof. Now, in truth the Rubicon was passed.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CONVENTION.

FROM the gay drawing-room of Sir Blundell Haughton, radiant with lights, to a back room in the heart of Bethnal Green, the lair of a Chartist Convention, was a change such as London only could furnish. To this retreat Harold had accompanied Brookman, on the evening following his visit to Nampced House.

The delegates, of whom Brookman was one, were seated at a table, lit by six candles, thrust in old tin candlesticks, coated with grease and dirt. From this galaxy a dim light spread over the rest of the room, occupied by some dozen listeners, all grouped together in front of the table. The delegates, amounting to the same number—each having been privileged to introduce a friend, were, in appearance, as mixed as the spectators, comprising individuals of various classes, from a superior grade to the humblest. The chair was filled by a member of Parliament, who thus lent the sanction of his station to an unlawful meeting; and a Chartist novelist, whose fictions circulated widely among the poor, with a maudlin political writer, two or three demagogues, and a few small tradesmen and operatives, completed the council.

On the faces of the operatives alone could Harold trace the impress of a real interest in the cause, stamped in the anxious, earnest look that furrowed itself, so to speak, on their features. Even Brookman's countenance bore a different expression—evincing a sincere sympathy, full of

conviction, and occasionally lighting up with enthusiasm, but still, at times, throwing a sort of shadow over his gnarled brow, like the moody reflection of ambition. Such an assembly was no doubt a dangerous body, at a moment of great public excitement, owing to the influence which it unquestionably exercised over the working classes; but, as Harold contemplated each of its members in succession, he could see in it no true element of power. Its threats of resorting to physical measures, in the presence of those gaunt drooping mechanics, the muscle and sinew of its strength, and on whom it must rely for its legions, would have been ridiculous, if they had not created, on the one hand, a wide-spread panic, and on the other a mischievous delusion. But while he was sceptical of its physical power, Harold could appreciate its capabilities as a moral force, which, properly guided, might aspire to great results, and become, indeed, a voice and influence in the state.

The proceedings were opened by the chairman, whose tall solid frame, and hard features, were not unworthy of a leader, seeming to indicate both bodily and mental vigour, while, at the same time, they revealed, by unmistakable characteristics, his Celtic origin. This was further attested, when he commenced his speech, by a broad Munster brogue, rendering utterance harsh and discordant; but, notwithstanding, he possessed a certain kind of homely eloquence, well suited to his hearers, and which could not be heard with indifference by even a higher audience. His language was violent, yet guarded, though occasionally, when the point was one on which he might expatiate safely, he spoke with a vehemence that might have betokened the fell malady by which he was afterwards struck down. He was followed by other orators, advocating views still more extreme; and the further they departed from reason, the more were they applauded.

Harold marked with anxiety the effect of these orations on Brookman, and soon observed that he was also watched by one of the delegates, sitting at his right hand, and who, on the utterance of any revolutionary sentiment, or reference to physical force, bent over to him, and whispered in his ear, as if urging the same course. Harold had lately seen this man frequently in Brookman's company, and the bad impression he had conceived of him now deepened, so that he gradually brought himself to regard him as a sort of tempter, luring Brookman to destruction, and saw him, in imagination, coiling round and round his friend, like a serpent round his victim. Nor were his misgivings without ground, for the man was no other than Hawker, the emissary of Sir Everard Danvers.

But, whatever his fears, they were allayed when Brookman, in his usual calm voice, enunciated the principle he had always maintained, that the poor must look for redress, not to violence, but to the irresistible progress of truth. In the excited state of his audience, and after speeches so vehement, such a sentiment was not calculated to find favour; but Brookman was no mere stump orator; he spoke with earnestness, eloquence, and power. Every breast swelled as he laid bare the diseases and hit the leprous spots in the state; and eyes moistened as he dwelt on the wrongs, the sufferings, and the endurance of the poor. His speech, indeed, produced an effect not to be described, and when, at length, he resumed his seat, the prolonged applause of the operatives showed that he had touched the one chord that run through all their hearts.

But, while it made this impression, it served, at the same time, to pave the way for the harangue of a professional demagogue, by name Lirtsher, who adroitly seized its salient points, and contended that they were the

strongest arguments to resort to physical force, and justified resistance.

"It's very well to talk of resistance," said the chairman. "I am for resistance, if it were practicable. But where is it to begin?"

"Begin with the machinery," cried Lirtsher, "Break up that, and we shall have a fair day's wage for a fair day's work."

"I can't go with you there, friend," said an operative delegate from Manchester. "The machinery's bad for we in one way, no doubt. It takes the work from a many hands, and the bread from a many mouths; but I don't see how it can be helped; for if the masters don't keep machines, they'll be beat out of the market by foreigners, and that would be goin' from bad to worse."

This view of the question was received with derision by the audience, and some hisses, which so disconcerted the Manchester delegate, that he drooped his head in confusion.

"We're our own enemies, or machinery could never exist—would never have been introduced," said Lirtsher, following up this vantage. "Most of the machinery has been invented by working-men, who sold their class and themselves for filthy lucre. Now you would perpetuate it." Here there were murmurs of "shame!"—"I say no! destroy it, smash it, crush it to powder. Then we shall get our rights."

"It would be better to make the masters destroy it themselves," remarked the chairman; "and by that means you'll evade the law. Let us enjoin a general turnout till the point is conceded."

"And thousands starve in the interim!" cried Brookman. "Machinery is an evil, but it won't be got at either by breaking it up or by a general strike. And even sup-

pose such means would put it down here, would that influence its existence in other countries? Surely not! In fact, our superior machinery secures advantages to us which other countries can't command, and if you take away this superiority, you take away so much employment and so much bread from the native operative."

"Hear! hear!" cried Silas Baines, the Manchester man.

How far the assembly might have adopted such a view was not decided; for, at this juncture, a man who officiated as doorkeeper rushed into the room, and announced that a sergeant of police was at the door, demanding admittance.

"We'd better break up," said the chairman, who had turned very pale. "Can't we go out some other way?"

"Why should we?" demanded Brookman. "It's no breach of the law, I presume, for Englishmen to meet and discuss their grievances."

"But this is a secret meeting," said Lirtsher, "and tyranny may pervert it into a conspiracy."

"The meeting is not secret—I don't recognise it—I never intended it as such," cried the chairman, excitedly. "Why do you keep the police at the door? Bring them up directly—directly!"

"Ay, let them come," said Brookman. "We're not afraid; and if necessary, I, for one, will not shrink from treading in the steps of Hampden."

Nor was his bearing inconsistent with his words, and, indeed, it seemed to give courage to the whole assembly, though considerable uneasiness was evinced when the sergeant of police entered.

"So you've come to watch our proceedings, sir," cried the chairman, by turns overbearing and yielding. "We've no objection, I assure you. The Convention has no secrets; and what we say here, we say in the face of day."

"You are meeting with closed doors, sir," said the sergeant.

"Solely to prevent overcrowding," replied the Chairman, eagerly. "Every one who comes is admitted, as you have been, and all these." And he pointed to the visitors, several of whom were making their way out.

"Well, I have no business with that now, sir," returned the sergeant. "I have come here to take two persons into custody—Tobias Lirtsher and Algernon Brookman."

"I am ready," said Brookman, standing up.

Lirtsher had disappeared.

"Oh! he isn't here to-night?" said the sergeant. "Well, I dare say we can find him. You'll come with me, sir," he added to Brookman. "I take you on a charge of misdemeanour."

"Come on," said Brookman.

He looked round for Harold, who, however, was already at his side.

"Mr. Brookman can be bailed, I presume?" he said to the sergeant.

"I don't know," was the reply. "My orders are to take him to the Home Office."

"Then I may go with you?"

"No."

While these few words passed, they were joined by several other constables; and Brookman was hurried down the stairs to the street, not without some manifestations of sympathy from his compatriots, in which the chairman, emboldened by the general feeling, took part. It was with difficulty Harold effected his egress, reaching the street in time to see Brookman handed into a cab, which instantly drove off.

Harold followed on foot at a rapid pace, keeping sight of the cab till it reached Whitehall. He tried in vain to

gain admittance to the Home Office, which the porter peremptorily refused, and he waited outside till, after an interval of about an hour, Brookman was brought forth.

"I thought you'd be here, Harry," said the Chartist, smiling. "They've caught me at last; and I must stand my trial. Take care of Amy, and keep her spirits up. I leave her to you."

"But must you really go to prison?" asked Harold.

"Well, he must, for the present," said the sergeant. "It's misdeameanour. But his friends will have leave to see him."

"There's a privilege for us, as Englishmen, Harry," said Brookman, derisively. "But, good bye!" And shaking his friend's hand, he jumped into the cab.

"One word!" cried Harold. "Where are they taking you to?"

"To Newgate!"

And the cab drove off.

CHAPTER X.

DISCOVERY.

ELEANOR'S flight from home was not discovered till the evening. Sir Blundell, rising later than usual, breakfasted in his dressing-room; and immediately set off for town, to transact some necessary business at the bank. Lady Haughton did not rise till one o'clock, her ordinary hour; and then shut herself up in her boudoir. Naturally kind-hearted, she began to think, when left to her own reflec-

tions, that she had treated Eleanor with unwarranted harshness, and, in spite of her resentment and dislike, she could not repress a feeling of remorse. She was still incensed against Eleanor, but she was angry also with her mother and herself. Languor and ennui, those worms in the core of fashionable life, added to her disquietude, at once irritating and depressing; and thus every kindly instinct was stifled as it rose. She made no inquiry for Eleanor, but supposed, from her non-appearance, that she was indulging an ebullition of temper, which it would be better not to observe; and her mother's society she shunned. In this state of weariness and spleen, she took refuge in a French novel, and, excluding the real world, was soon lost in its exciting details.

At length, throwing down her book, she went out for a drive, and in Hyde Park encountered Danvers, who rode along by her carriage for some time; and, at parting, engaged to meet her at dinner. There was no other guest; but Danvers, by his vivacity and wit, amused Rosalie and Mrs. Addlefield, and for the time they forgot Eleanor. Her absence was observed by Sir Blundell; but as it was not referred to by his wife, he made no remark, fearing to touch on some new discord. The ladies, however, had not been long in the drawing-room, when he and Danvers rejoined them, and he resolved to take an opportunity of inquiring about Eleanor. It was at this moment Rosalie became aware of her disappearance.

"What an artful, designing girl!" exclaimed Mrs. Addlefield, on hearing the intelligence. "She's gone off with that young man, I dare say."

An exclamation of dismay broke from Sir Blundell.

"What young man do you mean?" asked Danvers of Mrs. Addlefield.

"That young Arkworth, who was here last night," said Mrs. Addlefield.

"And do you think they've gone to Gretna?" inquired Rosalie.

"I feel sure of it."

Sir Blundell started up. "I'll go to the railway at once, and follow them," he said. "Order the carriage! Or—no! it will be quicker to take a Hansom. Ah! I thought Eleanor had more taste than this!"

"After all," said Danvers, "she may not have gone with this Arkworth."

"I must confess, I doubt it," observed Rosalie, whose heart whispered a different reason for Eleanor's flight.

"Where does the fellow live?" returned Danvers. "I'll go and see after him at his house, while Sir Blundell makes inquiries at the railway."

"How kind of you!" exclaimed Mrs. Addlefield. "But I always expect you to be kind, because you're religious, and religion teaches us good feeling and good-nature."

"Here is the address," said Rosalie, producing an address-book. "At Mr. Algernon Brookman's, Kennington."

"ALGERNON BROOKMAN!" repeated Danvers, in an altered voice, recognising a name which seemed to fling a shadow over his life. "I will go directly; and return and tell you the result."

"Pray do," said Sir Blundell. "By that time I shall be back from the railway." And they quitted the room together.

Danvers's cabriolet was at the door, and, springing in, he drove at a rapid pace towards town. Without betraying any personal object, he should now, as Sir Blundell's envoy, be able to see Brookman, and perhaps his daughter, the

unconscious heir of the Seafords, who might one day contend with him for their inheritance. A host of evil suggestions arose at the thought. He had, he imagined, already prepared the ruin of Brookman: it might soon be necessary to remove the child. But of this he could better judge after they had met.

CHAPTER XI.

THE MYSTERIOUS PORTRAIT.

As the hours sped on, and neither her father nor Harold came home, Amy began to grow uneasy, and her apprehensions were increased by a report from the faithful Lucy Flight that she had again observed a "'tective" lurking about the house.

"It's curious," pursued Lucy, by way of moral to her communication, "but there's a story about a 'tective now goin' on in the *London Harrower*, and a regular villain he is. Would you like to read it, Miss Amy? I'll go and fetch it if you would."

"No, thank you, Lucy," replied Amy. "I can't read anything now."

"Such are the troubles of life!" exclaimed Lucy. "As soon as we grow up we all come into 'em, just as rich people come into a fortune. I dare say that's why they call it comin' to man's estate, though there ain't no reason partic'lar, that I see, for sayin' *man's* estate, when most of it falls on us women. But then the men seize on everything; I've no patience with them."

"They all seem very civil to you, Lucy," observed Amy, "particularly the postman."

"To me, Miss Amy! Oh, dear no! I'd like to see him civil to me, indeed!—yes, I would!"—And Lucy laughed and tossed her head, so that it was a greater marvel than ever how the little fly-away cap retained its place aloft. "What do you think, Miss Amy, he had the impudence to do? He came to the door with his double rat-tat, and gave me a letter for myself, with a head on it all regular, and when I opened it, lo and behold it was a valentine from hisself, and hadn't ever been in the post at all. I was so mad. I could have tore it in bits."

Whether the unlucky valentine met with this fate, or was preserved as a souvenir, is not known; for as Lucy spoke there was a loud knock at the door, interrupting her story, and startling both herself and Amy.

"Lor! who can it be?" cried Lucy. "It's not master's rap, nor Mr. Arkworth's. I'll tell you what, Miss Amy. It's the 'tective."

"Oh, no!" replied Amy, whose shrewd perceptions were not easily misled. "It's a gentleman's knock."

"Gentleman's! Ah! Miss Amy, you don't know them 'tectives. They can change themselves into gentlemen or anything. But I'll go and see who it is, at any rate—only don't you be frightened!"

"I'll try not to be."

"That's right," said Lucy. And she hurried to the door, though only to reconnoitre through the keyhole, till, after a moment's interval, the knocker commenced a second peal, when she opened the door in the middle of it. Amy, whose ear caught every sound, heard a step in the passage; and her heart beat quick as, looking up, she found herself confronted by a stranger. It was Danvers.

The baronet suffered no movement to betray his own

satisfaction at the rencontre, so much more than he had expected, though, as he entered, there was something in his first glance that made the young girl recoil. This, however, was only a momentary feeling, and, almost as it rose, she was reassured by his appearance and demeanour. Not so Lucy, who, as she stood at the open door of the room, with her hand on the handle, kept her gaze fixed on Danvers, as if partly in wonder at his impudence in pushing past her, and partly from her unshaken conviction that he was a detective in disguise.

"I must apologise for entering unannounced," said Danvers, in his blandest tone; "but hearing your father was not at home, and you were here—for I presume I have the pleasure of addressing Miss Brookman?"

"My name is Brookman, sir," replied Amy.

"Precisely. Well, finding you were here, I thought you might be able to give me some information I wanted. But what I have to say is private." And he glanced significantly at Lucy.

Amy's apprehensions revived, but she tried to restrain them. "You can go away, Lucy," she said. And the soubrette reluctantly withdrew.

"Do you expect your father home soon?" asked Danvers, directly they were alone.

"Every moment, sir," answered Amy. "I am quite uneasy at his being so late."

"And Mr. Arkworth?—he lives here, does he not?"

"Yes."

"And he is out, too?"

"He is with my father."

"Oh, indeed! I may seem very inquisitive to you, but it is from no idle motive. Can you tell me if they know what has occurred at Sir Blundell Haughton's?"

"Sir Blundell Haughton's!" exclaimed Amy, relieved,

yet interested. "They have heard nothing, I am sure. I hope no accident has happened."

"Not an accident," replied Danvers; "but something very strange. But as you expect them soon, I'll wait till they come in."

Here his eye, darting round the room, suddenly fell on the old portrait over the mantelpiece, mentioned in a former chapter as bearing a strong resemblance to Amy. In an instant the expression of his face changed.

"Only for the ancient costume, I should think that was your father's portrait," he said, in a careless tone. "It's very like you."

"So Harold—I mean Mr. Arkworth—says," replied Amy.

'And no doubt there is a good explanation of the likeness. It is probably a family picture."

"I think not," replied Amy; "for my father has never said so, and he has often heard me wonder who it was."

"Does he avoid the subject, then?" asked Danvers, quickly.

"Not avoid," replied Amy; "for he makes no answer. But I'm sure, if it were a family portrait, he would tell me."

"Now at your age I should have been piqued, rather than satisfied by his silence," said Danvers. "Have you never thought it strange?"

"Oh, no! But here they come. That is Har—Mr. Arkworth's knock."

Harold's voice, indeed, was heard without, and the next moment he entered the room. Amy was alarmed to see him alone, and the uneasiness depicted on his face seemed to warrant her fears.

"Where is my father?" she asked, anxiously, as Harold was turning to Sir Everard.

"He's not coming home yet," replied Harold. And he added, to their visitor, "Are you waiting to see Mr. Brookman, Sir Everard?"

"No," answered Danvers, cavalierly, without returning his salutation, "my business is with yourself."

"I am ready to attend you. Shall we go into the next room?"

"By no means. I have nothing to say which this young lady may not hear. My errand is simply to ask what you know of the flight of Miss Haughton."

"Has Miss Haughton left home, then?" said Harold, too amazed at the intelligence to notice the rudeness to himself, while Amy could not repress an exclamation.

"You were not aware of it, of course," said Danvers, with an incredulous smile.

"Assuredly not."

"And you have no idea where Miss Haughton now is?"

"Not the remotest."

"Pray reflect before you commit yourself to such an assertion. Sir Blundell has good reason to believe you are implicated in this business—that, in fact, you have inveigled the young lady away—and I have come to make inquiries of you by his authority."

"No one can give you authority to ask me impertinent questions, or to impute to me dishonourable actions," replied Harold, indignantly. "It is not my practice to carry dissension and discord into the families of my friends; and I repeat, from consideration for Sir Blundell Haughton, and not to satisfy you, that I know nothing whatever of Miss Haughton's disappearance."

"You will have to convince Sir Blundell of that," answered Danvers, with something of a sneer. "My part in the affair is at an end."

As he turned to the door, he again bent on Amy

a cold, searching, lurid look, once more making her shrink, and then, with a bland smile and bow, strode forth.

"I'm so glad he's gone," exclaimed Amy, drawing a deep breath. "I don't know how it was, but his eye quite overawed me. And you, poor Harold! how you will grieve about Miss Haughton!"

"If I were only assured of her safety, and that she is with those who will love and protect her, I should not grieve," replied Harold. "But when I consider how tenderly she has been reared, when I remember her inexperience and innocence, and then think of her being exposed to all the wiles of the world, perhaps without a friend to aid or counsel her, I can't help being anxious."

"But is it not very wrong of her to run away, Harold?"

"Her home was so unhappy. She stopped as long as she could, I'm sure."

"But did she stop as long as she ought? In such a step, she should have consulted not her feelings, but her duty."

"And how can we say she did not, when we are ignorant of the facts? If you knew her, Amy, you would be the last to judge her hardly, and would feel a confidence in her rectitude and devotedness. You would sympathise with her, as, if she were here, she would with you, in the great trial coming on yourself."

"What do you mean, Harold?" asked Amy, breathlessly. "But your words and looks both tell me. My father is taken!"

Harold was silent.

"Oh! let me know the worst!—let me know at once! Is he in prison?"

"He is a state prisoner," replied Harold, trying to gild the unwelcome truth, "and won't be treated harshly; so

we must bear it as well as we can, Amy. Besides, he has to be tried yet, and may be acquitted."

Amy shook her head. She seemed, in her ignorance of politics and the world, to have a clearer perception of her father's situation than Harold.

"We will go and see him to-morrow," said the young man.

"I will go at once," replied Amy. "What prison is he in?"

"Newgate," said Harold. "But it is useless going to-night; they won't admit you. No, no! go to bed, Amy. To-morrow you may be called upon to act, and if you act like yourself, your burden will be all the lighter."

"If we can only save my father!" exclaimed the young girl, repressing her tears. "But you advise for the best, Harold. Good night!"

And they shook hands at the door, and parted.

CHAPTER XII.

A NIGHT WALK.

It would have been a touching sight, could any one have seen Amy, when she reached her own room, kneel down by the side of her little bed, and make a child's appeal to Heaven; so beautiful was this revelation of faith, the young girl throwing herself on her Invisible Protector, in all hope and trust and meek reliance, as if for the moment her spirit shook off the dull perceptions of poor humanity, and realised the presence of its Creator. She rose from her

knees with a composed look—too composed, indeed, for her years, and this air of quietude enchased, as it were, her whole figure, giving it a strangely spiritual and almost unearthly appearance.

She had formed a resolution to steal out of the house, and go and look at her father's prison. True, as she knew from Harold, it was too late to gain admittance; but she could see the outside of the gloomy gaol, could pace before the door, could feel that her father's heart beat within, though as in a tomb. She waited till she heard Harold retire to his room; then, drawing on her mantle and bonnet, she noiselessly descended the stairs, opened the street door, and passed out.

It was approaching midnight. The night, though fine, was dark, and in that part of the town the streets were deserted. But, though ordinarily timid, Amy now forgot her fears, for she forgot herself. She had but one thought, and that was her father. The poor child comforted herself, as she went along, with the fond delusion that, buried in his dungeon, Brookman would understand she was without, scanning the grim wall that stood between them. The prison, kernelled in the heart of the city, was at no great distance from Sir Blundell Haughton, Moneypenny, and Co.'s, where she often went to call for her father, and had thus seen it in passing. There was, therefore, no necessity to make inquiries, and she was able to hurry on without stopping, reaching the dark, louring, and lonely street as the clock of St. Paul's struck one.

The iron voice of the cathedral awakened a response on every side, and clock after clock, faithful registrars of time, successively tolled forth the solemn note, which announced the birth of another day. Amy stood before the frowning gaol, which flung down its shadow like a curse, blighting the very pavement. What crime, what guilt, what wicked-

ness, lay within its cells, like moths within their chrysalis, dormant, but not dead! And might there not be sorrow and remorse,—perhaps innocence? Amy remembered her father. Him she could not think guilty; and from this monument of human depravity and human shame, the young girl, in her sublime faith, raised her eyes to the mighty sphere above, where the stars, which give their light to both the evil and the good, gleamed forth like watchful spirits, noting what wrong was done on earth. But at that moment she could not restrain her tears, and truly they were such as might have made angels weep.

Suddenly she observed one of the prison doors open, and two men come out. They stood talking for a moment, when they parted, and one, after looking carefully round, crossed over towards where she was standing. Instinctively she shrank into a doorway, where, buried in deep shadow, she hoped to escape observation. The man stopped just before her, and, to her surprise, another, who had been standing in an adjacent archway, strode forth and joined him.

"Is he there?" asked the new-comer, in a voice which Amy thought she had heard but recently.

"He's there, safe as a nail, baronet," was the reply; but in that part of the street it was too dark to recognise the speakers. "I told you," pursued the man, "it was all right."

"And you think there is evidence to convict him?"

"With what I can say there is. But you must pay up, baronet."

"Let him be convicted, and you shall have no cause to grumble. You've had none hitherto, I think?"

"Well, I can't say I have exactly, but it's been trying work, and cost me a good deal of money, one way and another."

"This will repay you." And the speaker drew forth

a note, and placed it in his hand. "You'll make a good harvest by the time you have done; for I think we shall have to remove another, as well as him."

"You mean HER?"

"Yes."

"Has the claim got wind, then?"

"Claim! You think there *is* a claim! Ha! ha! No. But I've seen her; and have taken a fancy to send her to school."

"Oh! if that's all, baronet, leave it to me, and you shall have your fancy."

They both moved off as he spoke; and Amy, unconscious how deeply she was interested in their conversation, which was too enigmatical for her to comprehend, thought she could now glide away unobserved. The two men separated, and the one addressed as baronet proceeded towards Holborn, while the other, sauntering slowly along, came face to face towards Amy. The young girl had heard sufficient to understand his desperate character, and saw him approach with irrepressible dread. Once she thought of retreating in the opposite direction, but the man was now too close to be avoided; and all she could do, as she passed under a gas-lamp, was to avert her head, so as to elude his eye. She almost expected, as they came abreast of each other, that the man, in passing, would catch hold of her, and she scarcely dared to breathe. But, though he darted a keen glance at the child as she went by, yet, her face being turned away, he did not recognise her, and she escaped unmolested.

Quickening her pace, she made her way to Kennington; and, reaching home, cautiously opened the door with the key, entered with noiseless steps, and gained her own room.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE DISMISSAL.

AMY was very dejected next morning, when she and Harold met at breakfast; but Harold was so attentive to her, he spoke so kindly and so soothingly, that she felt consoled and cheered. He was obliged to go to the banking-house, both to account for the absence of Brookman, and to obtain leave for himself; but he promised, on setting out, to return speedily, and go with her to visit her father.

Not to delay, he sprang into a cab, and urged on the driver with a promise of a gratuity. Blended with his wish to hasten back to Amy, indeed, was a hope that he might hear at the bank some tidings of Eleanor, and, once on the way, he could scarcely restrain himself till he reached the city.

On entering the office, he was struck, as he looked round, by the furtive glances which met him on every side; and he had but just taken his seat, when he was summoned to the partners' room.

Sir Blundell and Mr. Moneypenny were in deep consultation when he appeared, and the troubled expression of the baronet's face, usually so placid, left no doubt of the subject they were discussing. Both turned upon Harold with a scowl.

"Sir Everard Danvers tells me you persist in saying you know nothing of the disappearance of Miss Haughton," said Sir Blundell, in accents that betrayed his agitation: "in fact, nothing!"

"Positively, nothing, Sir Blundell," replied Harold. "How can it be supposed I do?"

Sir Blundell eyed him suspiciously.

"You put on an air of innocence, but it won't pass," observed Mr. Moneypenny, with knitted brows. "You have been observed holding more communication with this young lady than was becoming, and there is reason to think you have trepanned her."

"That is precisely the case," said Sir Blundell.

"Sir Blundell has been very kind to you—too kind," pursued Mr. Moneypenny. "He has had you at his house, and treated you as an equal. If there's a thing I hate, it is ingratitude, and your ingratitude is monstrous."

"This is language I will not submit to," exclaimed Harold, indignantly.

"Don't talk of language," returned Moneypenny, contemptuously. "Language is nothing. It will neither break your head, nor buy you a plaster. But confidence is another thing: confidence among commercial men is money. It comes next to paper, and, indeed, is the figure *on* the paper. You have violated confidence, and can no longer be trusted."

"Sir!" cried Harold, in an angry voice, "I fling back your imputations with scorn. But Sir Blundell Haughton has, as you say, claims on my forbearance and respect; and on this account I answer a charge I should otherwise contemn. I declare, on my honour, I have never had any communication with Miss Haughton, which might not have been made before the world—that I was entirely ignorant of her having any intention of leaving home, and that I share her father's anxiety for her safety."

"Who can believe you?" retorted Moneypenny. "A man who breaks confidence will say anything."

"If he has done so," said Sir Blundell; "but that is

not certain. You speak without reservation, Mr. Arkworth, do you? You do! you do!" he added, with a burst of emotion.

"Most emphatically I do, Sir Blundell," said Harold.

"Yes, yes, of course," observed Moneypenny, derisively.

"I do not address myself to you, sir," said Harold; "for to you I have but one word to say. You have accused me of violating confidence, and, after such an accusation, I can no longer remain in your employment. I beg to tender my resignation."

"It only anticipates your dismissal," cried Moneypenny. "Ingratitude and breach of trust I could never pardon."

"Stop," said Sir Blundell, more calmly, and rather in sorrow than in anger; "I begin to think Mr. Arkworth is innocent, which is a very great satisfaction to me—in fact, very. But it would be disagreeable, after this scene, for him to remain in the banking-house, and so he had better go. At the same time, I beg he will accept a check for his year's salary, as a mark of my good will."

"My dear Sir Blundell," began Moneypenny, "this is really—"

"Pray, sir," cried Harold, interrupting him, "spare your words, if they relate to me. I am very sensible of Sir Blundell's kindness, but it is what I could not accept. I yesterday received my quarter's salary, and the firm owe me nothing. Our connection is at an end."

And, bending to Sir Blundell, he quitted the room, and, taking up his hat in the outer office, walked straight out of the bank.

CHAPTER XIV.

A STATE PRISONER.

HAROLD, on reaching home, found Amy in tears; and a letter with the seal of Haughton, Moneypenny, and Co., addressed to Brookman, and which had just been left by the bank porter, explained her emotion.

"I'm afraid it's father's dismissal," she remarked; "for Lucy says the account of his being taken is in the newspapers, and no doubt the firm have seen it. What shall we do if he loses his engagement?"

"He must be fully prepared for such an event," replied Harold, concealing for the moment his own situation: "so don't let that distress you, Amy. Even should it prove so, it will only pinch you for a time; for your father, if he were once out of prison, could earn a livelihood almost anywhere."

"Ah! if he were out of prison—if he were! But yet you cheer and encourage me, Harold; and it is so wrong of me to repine. I feel better when you are near me—so much better. And we'll go and see dear father now—shall we? You see, I've got my bonnet and all on, to be ready to start directly you came."

"Let us go, then, Amy."

They were met in the passage by Lucy, who, knowing their mission, ran up from the kitchen to open the door, as soon as she heard them move.

"Don't fret, Miss Amy," she whispered, as her young mistress passed; though it was plain, from the redness

round her eyes, that she had been weeping herself. "I dreamt last night master jumped out of the window, and, as sure as you stand there, that means he'll be let out of prison."

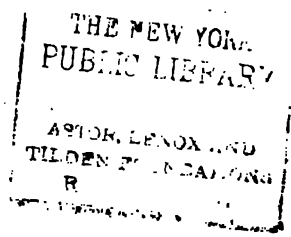
"We will hope the best, Lucy," replied Amy, in her quiet way; "but at present we mustn't expect too much."

"Oh, no!" returned Lucy: "only we'll keep up our spirits, Miss Amy. There's a good time comin'."

Poor Lucy, in fact, had her own misgivings, and could not repress an apprehension that her master was doomed to be hanged, and afterwards beheaded, drawn, and quartered, in accordance with the good old usage; but, when she saw her mistress so troubled, she shrank from playing Job's comforter, and hence her report of the dream—which, however it may tell against Lucy's veracity, we are bound to say was a pure invention. She watched at the door until Amy and Harold were out of sight, and then returned to the kitchen, and resumed her avocations with a heavy heart.

Amy and Harold pursued their way at a quick pace, talking as they went on the one subject that now engrossed their thoughts. In that great city, swarming with passengers, and pouring through its many streets a thousand streams of life and traffic, they seemed to be alone—as if they were floating on a frail raft, within sight of shore, and none, of all the crowd who swept past, saw them amidst the breakers. How many of those they encountered, apparently at their ease, were as sad and desolate as themselves; and, like them, were borne along by the tide, unnoticed and unthought of!

They reached the prison; and Amy, with all her courage, could not repress a slight shudder as she followed Harold up the steps. There was some delay before they were admitted; but, at length, the sanction of the governor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was obtained, and they were led by a turnkey into a narrow passage, communicating with about half a dozen cells, one of which, the last in the row, was occupied by Brookman.

The Chartist had a prayer-book in his hand as they entered, and was reading aloud from the Psalms of the day—"Let us break their bonds in sunder, and cast away their cords from us."

"Ah, Harry!" he cried, perceiving his visitors: "and you, Amy! Bless you, my child!" And he folded the young girl in his arms. "There, sit you down, both of you," he added, pointing to his iron bedstead. "It's a hard seat for you, but here we've nothing but iron and stone."

"Dear, dear, dear father!" cried Amy, clinging round his neck.

"You're a little gipsy," returned Brookman, "and I won't have you come to see me again." But he pressed her closer and closer in his arms. "I was proud of being in prison, and now you've come to humble me—to make me feel I may have honour here, but my treasure is outside."

"I won't come to humble you, or to grieve you, dear father," replied Amy. "But do you think they'll let me stop? I'll be so quiet: they won't hear me move!"

"Not move!" rejoined the Chartist, heartily. "Why, you little mouse, you'd be bustling about putting the place to rights all day! I know you! But, at any rate, *they*, as you call them, won't permit it. So now sit down, and let me have a talk with Harry."

Harold, unwilling to interrupt their greetings, had yet hardly spoken; but, as Amy sat down beside him, wrapped up, as it seemed, in her own thoughts, and composed as a statue, he presented Brookman the letter from the bank, and the Chartist calmly broke the seal, and read it.

"This is what I looked for," he said. "We know the rich: we know how master behaves to man; and the end is always the same. It matters not that I have given these people the ten best years of my life: that I have been more careful of their vile gold than if it had been my own; I presume, as a private citizen, when out of their sphere, to speak and act like a man, and they turn me off without notice."

"It is hard usage," said Harold, in the same bitter spirit.

"They have their portion in this world," observed Brookman; "let our hope be in the next."

"Could we make it so, it would be a consolation which no present misery could outweigh," rejoined Harold.

"Let us but reflect, let us but look out on the world, and we can come to no other conclusion," said Brookman. "The inequalities of life explain their own inconsistency; and, as we see the rich enjoying every luxury, and developing every vice—as we see the poor suffering every privation, and yet practising virtue, we must feel there is to be another distribution hereafter, when they who have done good and they who have done evil will each receive their reward."

"I subscribe to that faith as a Christian as well as a rational being; but, with such a belief, knowing these inequalities exist by the will of Heaven, why do you strive to amend them?"

"Because my heart recoils from oppression—because I must ever struggle against wrong, as you yourself will and do,—only you take the pen, I use my voice."

"And now it will be made to witness against you; though, if not perverted, its testimony should be in your favour. But our first business must be to procure you a clever lawyer."

"I'll be my own lawyer. I intend to defend myself."

"Then your cause is lost."

"You've a poor opinion of my abilities," said Brookman, with a good-tempered smile.

"Far from it. But when we are amidst the quicksands of the law, we should look for a pilot, and not risk our safety from a mistaken confidence in ourselves."

"My confidence is in justice and right."

"But I have heard you say they are not law."

"Grant it," answered Brookman: "will you concede nothing to principle?"

"It is you who must concede," replied Harold, "if not to principle, to circumstances, and still more to poor Amy."

Amy, whose eye, as they spoke, had moved from one to the other with a quick, thoughtful glance, here clasped her father's hand. The mute appeal had more effect than words.

"I see, you're both in league," said Brookman. "What can a man do against the best child and the best friend in the world? But I must think it over. I'd set my heart upon this, and can't give it up all at once. You'll be here again next visiting day—that will be two days hence; and then I'll let you know."

Harold, content to have made an impression, did not push the subject further. There was, indeed, no opportunity for discussion, as the time allowed for their interview soon expired, and they were reminded of the fact by the appearance of the turnkey. Amy bore the parting with meek submission, as if, during her short visit, the dense atmosphere of the prison had subdued and disciplined her spirit, and brought out all its endurance. This sweet patience of woman is, if possible, more touching than her tears; and

it now wrung the heart of the sturdy Chartist, as the iron door closed between him and his daughter.

But Brookman possessed, with greater vehemence of character, all his child's strength of purpose. If his rugged nature embraced the gentlest qualities, just as we find soft and delicate moss growing in the crevices of rocks, it could also, by a change of mood, become intractable as granite; and, while on some points he could be moved by a word, for others he would have died at the stake. His character was, in fact, a strange compound of energy and weakness —of stubborn prejudices, resentments, and class predilections, now overruled by the innate goodness of his heart, now nourished and fostered by an uncouth spirit of independence. It has before been said that he was not free from ambition, but it was ambition of the highest kind—a desire to lead, but to do so by the proud right of superior virtue, the only superiority he acknowledged. With these springs of action was associated, far beneath out of sight—like a gem underground—a deep religious feeling. In the wilds of America, he had acquired not only the republicanism, but something of the creed, of the old Puritans—their creed without their fanaticism, though it was, in its way, wild and peculiar, too. While he would have stood erect before a king, he bent his knee to God; there was no book he read like his Bible; yet church or chapel he never entered. The church he loved was the broad green field, and had for its dome the mighty firmament. Here, removed from the great city, unobserved, unrestrained, he felt himself alone with nature and with God; and here he could read aloud the words of promise, repeat a simple prayer, sing a hymn of fervent praise, and, while the sweet pure air floated like incense around, be his own pastor and his own priest.

On the next visiting day, just as he was looking for

the appearance of Harold and Amy, the turnkey opened the door of his cell, and admitted a working-man, whom Brookman recognised as Silas Baines, the Manchester delegate to the Convention, and whose moderate counsel had given so much offence at the last meeting. Brookman held out his hand, and bade his visitor welcome.

"I'm sorry to see you here, friend," remarked Silas, in a tone of sympathy.

"It's in a good cause," answered Brookman, cheerily.

"That won't feed wife and babes, if you've got 'em," returned the Manchester man; "nor it won't get you clear off, if the law goes against you."

"Then what is law but tyranny; and what are we but slaves?"

"Very true, friend. It's a burning shame, no doubt; but that don't mend it. The rich are too strong for the poor, and they've one law for themselves and another for us; so when we're down, it's no use kickin', and we must try what we can do by management. That's just what I've come to you about."

"You're kind and brotherly to do it, and as one of the masses, and a delegate yourself, you'll know how I ought to act. Tell me frankly and plainly."

"First, you can do nothing without money, friend. I don't know how you're off in that partic'lar, but I suppose we've none of us over much; and so my folk—that's them down in Manchester—has clubbed together, and they've sent me up a purse for you; and, by the same rule, they've got a clever lawyer, as is used to this sort o' work, and he's comin' up to manage your defence—which I'm very glad on, for I hear it will go dreadful hard with you."

"I didn't expect this," said Brookman, shading his face with his hand; "these poor, honest, crushed people, who labour so unceasingly, and for so little, to give up their

scanty earnings to me. But I couldn't take it—not if I were starving!"

"You're too proud, friend," said the Manchester man, in a tone that showed he was wounded.

"No, no!" replied Brookman, grasping his hand, "not proud; I'm grateful. Tell them so; and some day, if I happen to get off, I'll tell them so myself. And to show you I'm not proud, I'll strike a bargain with you. I accept the defence; manage it as you like; but the purse must go back. That I couldn't touch."

"If you could, we'd all be the better pleased," said Silas; "but you're goin' on a good principle, I can't deny; and all I say is, don't let yourself, or them you've got at home, be pinched; there's no occasion. But you'll have Lawyer Smart here directly; so now I'll be movin'."

He had been gone but a few minutes when Brookman was joined by Harold and Amy. Since their last meeting, Harold, daily becoming more anxious, had seriously considered what should be done for his friend's defence, and had held frequent conferences with Amy on the subject. Like most young men, he lived up to his means, which, as may be supposed, were not large, and, as for Brookman himself, his improvidence was such that it required all Amy's management to keep within bounds. There was, therefore, no hoard to fall back upon, but they both conceived that the necessary funds might be easily raised by the sale of some redundant articles. Harold had come to the prison prepared to communicate their proposed arrangements to Brookman, and convinced that not a moment was to be lost, as the most alarming reports were in circulation, both in the newspapers and in places of public resort, as to the charges intended to be brought against Brookman, the evidence by which they would be supported, and the determination of the Government to push the case

to the utmost. All this he now told Brookman, and at the same time informed him what he had already divulged to Amy, that he had, like himself, ceased to be connected with the bank, and was endeavouring to earn an humble subsistence by his pen.

There was little comfort in such tidings, but Brookman, though he winced once or twice, listened patiently, only uttering an exclamation when he heard of Harold's secession from the bank, and looking anxiously at Amy, who, on her part, kept her eyes fixed on the floor, in her customary way, as if absorbed in her own thoughts. But she looked up when her father mentioned the subscription raised for his defence in Manchester, and announced his intention of committing his cause to the experienced lawyer thus provided for him, relieving both herself and Harold of a weight of solicitude; though their fears of the result, in their ignorance of what might be brought against him, were undiminished.

As they were going away, the turnkey introduced a short, spare, wiry-looking man, with a thin, sharp face, and an eye that, as it darted round, pierced, and, as it were, transfixed everybody, as if it went through one's head, like Jael's nail, and pinned it to the wall behind. He caught sight of the receding figure of Amy, and seemed struck by her appearance, looking back through the closing door, as she passed up the passage, till lock and bolt abruptly barred the view. The weird eye then fell on Brookman.

"Friend of yours?" he remarked, pointing over his shoulder at the door.

"One is my friend, and the other my daughter," replied Brookman, surveying his visitor with calm surprise.

"Daughter, eh! strange! What's her name?"

"Brookman."

"Ay, ay, of course! But her Christian name?"

"Amy."

"Ah! a fancy name! Your good old family names now are what I like—names that turn up one generation after another. But I dare say you want to know *my* name now."

"All in good time," answered Brookman.

"Egad, you take it pretty easy, considering," said his visitor, looking round the cell. "But the fact is, you stand in rather a ticklish situation, and I've come all the way from Manchester to see if you can be brought out of it."

"Thank you kindly. You're Lawyer Smart, I suppose?"

"Just so. And now, let me hear, in a few words, all they can bring against you. The reports in the newspapers speak of strong language at public meetings, which will be sworn to by a short-hand writer, employed by the Government; but I find they rely for your conviction on the evidence of another witness, who is kept back for the present, but who, it is said, will clearly establish the charge of conspiracy. Do you know who this is?"

"No."

"Are there none of these people with whom you have been more communicative than others?"

"I've always expressed my sentiments openly and in public; though I may, at times, have spoken more freely to two delegates who were most in my company, Lirtsher and Hawker."

"Hawker!" exclaimed the lawyer, quickly—"not Ned Hawker?"

"I can't say."

"Has he got a scar on his cheek, and a slight cast in his left eye?"

"That's the man."

"And so you've made a confidant of *him*, have you? And, I dare say, plotted with him to blow up the Parlia-

ment House, pull down the Monument, and set the Thames on fire."

"Pish!" muttered Brookman, with an impatient gesture.

"What you sought was just as practicable," returned Lawyer Smart. "But we won't enter into that. It's your delusion. We're all mad on one point, and yours is Chartism. All I have to do now, is to learn what you've said to Hawker—or, rather, what he'll swear you've said, though you may never have uttered or conceived the thought; for, take my word, he's the man who'll convict you. It can't be Lirtsher; for he's made the most of his legs, and reached the Continent."

"But," began Brookman, with warmth, "Hawker was—"

"For violence, and you for argument," said Smart, interrupting him. "I know all that: but he's got the ear of the Government, and there are passages in your reported speeches which may be twisted into anything."

"And you think he'll swear falsely?"

"Just as soon as he would to the truth—sooner, I believe. It's his point."

"Can man be so base, and dishonour a noble cause—the cause of the people."

"My good friend, do let the people take care of themselves, and, for the present, confine yourself to number one. I'm sure I'm on the right scent as regards Hawker; but before anything can be done, I must make a few inquiries about him. Then I'll come to you again; and, meanwhile, do, if you can, keep clear of your *point*. Now, good morning!"

So saying, he knocked with his stick against the door; the turnkey, who was waiting without, unlocked it; and passing forth, he left Brookman to his reflections.

CHAPTER XV.

THE STRUGGLE FOR BREAD.

HAROLD had truly said that Amy was very wise, and, when she heard of the suspension of their income, it was wonderful how she adapted herself, without a murmur and without delay, to their altered circumstances. Looking first to a reduction of their expenses, she proposed that they should give up the house and go into apartments; an arrangement the more practicable, as, by a special agreement with the landlord, the dwelling was only held from quarter to quarter, and one of these terms was just expiring. Amy's greatest trial was to part with Lucy, which, however, was a fundamental point in their scheme of retrenchment, although the poor girl, sincerely attached to the family, offered to give up her wages, and, as she forcibly expressed it, "to be slave," provided she might remain. Lucy, in fact, had at the moment a little grief of her own, as the faithless postman who had been assailing her with his attentions, whether from pique at her indifference, or from the natural inconstancy of postmen, had recently transferred his admiration to a handmaid on the opposite side of the street, not half so good-looking as Lucy (at least Lucy thought so), and who laced in—*dreadfully!* But Lucy revenged herself by throwing out mysterious hints of a young man in Australia, who was making his fortune at the diggings; and according to a letter in her possession, but which had not come through the post—no, indeed!—might be expected home every

day. It would be seen who would hold their heads up THEN!

In their new abode, Amy and Harold practised the strictest economy, but what is economy without supplies? —without, in fact, anything to economise! Harold soon found that the pen, with which he was to work such wonders, was no harlequin's wand, but, in truth, a mere broken reed; and his tales, essays, and articles were peremptorily rejected on every side. In one case, indeed, a tale was accepted on condition of non-payment, which might be flattering to the author, but would not give bread to the man. Day after day, night after night, he toiled with undiminished ardour, but always with the same result. He was only labouring at ropes of sand. How could he, without friends, without literary connections, without position, by the mere force of his talent and genius, climb the slippery ascent of Parnassus? Yet what else could he do? He was willing, since it could not be helped, to undertake anything that offered itself. He advertised, he answered advertisements, he sought for copying at the various law stationers—but all to no purpose; and he now learnt the painful truth, which it would be well ever to remember, that employment may be easily lost, but is very difficult to obtain.

This is the period of the literary career which is the most arduous, as well as most bitter. What is it, in the hour of success, when every written word commands a price, to paint the touching scene, or shed the sparkling thought, just as the magic press throws off an impression? But to do this with the mind depressed, in doubt and fear and misgiving, after repeated disappointments, and perhaps failures—that is a giant's task! The actor laughing on the stage, while some domestic sorrow is gnawing at his heart, feebly typifies the conflict.

But Harold had also to appear gay, or, at least, hopeful, before Amy—to put their situation in the best point of view, when it could hardly be in a worse; and to speak of things in a cheerful way, when all appeared gloomy and desperate. He had already parted clandestinely with his watch, and this little fund, the source of which she never suspected, Amy had converted into a cruise of oil, eking it out in a manner marvellous to see; but, with all her management, it came to an end at last. Then, as they shared its last relics, she had to announce the fact to Harold, who received the intelligence with a smile, and in the evening presented her with another sovereign; but Amy observed that he had come home without his great coat.

The truth now burst upon the young girl, particularly as Harold, who had indeed bought a biscuit while he was out, jesuitically declared that he had dined, and ate very sparingly at tea. She made no remark, but the next morning, as soon as Harold went out, she set forth herself, intent on making a tour of shops, to see if she could obtain any needlework. This would not produce much, she knew; but it might enable her to maintain herself, without burdening Harold; and that, if not all she could wish, would be a great thing. But great things are not easily attained, and from many a shop she was turned away with a curt, if not rude answer. At last, she entered one of more stylish appearance, in the fashionable quarter of the town, and found herself confronted by a little old lady, very smartly dressed, to whom she falteringly announced her errand.

Her artless manner, her pretty face, and rising colour, and soft, sweet, humble voice, seeming rather to plead than ask, made an immediate impression in her favour, and this was strengthened the next moment, when the old lady's

servant appeared at a glass door, leading to the inner room, and proved to be Lucy.

"Lor, Miss Amy! *is* that you?" cried Lucy, joyfully. "Well, I declare! And how do you do, Miss Amy? and how's Mr. Arkworth? and how's master?"

"Why, do you know the young lady, Lucy?" asked the owner of the shop, before Amy could reply.

"Know her, mem!" said Lucy. "Lor, yes! it's my old missis, or leastwise, my young missis—only you took my first character, you know, mem, because she'd gone away."

"And you're the poor child whose father is in prison?" said the old lady to Amy. "And you want me to give you some work, do you, my child?"

"If you would be so good, ma'am," replied Amy.

"I don't think you could do enough at it to keep yourself, my dear," was the answer; "but I'm just now in want of some one to assist the young ladies here"—there were three in attendance—"to look after the shop. That would suit you. That's business, you see." The old lady was a great advocate for what she called "business." "Do you think you'd like to undertake that?"

"Oh, yes, very much, if you'll be so kind as to take me."

A bargain was struck; Amy, only too eager to be employed, agreed to be in attendance from eight o'clock in the morning until eight at night, for which she was to receive two shillings weekly and her board, going home to sleep. This arranged, she took her departure, with the understanding that her engagement was to begin from the next morning.

Proud Amy was, as she walked home, at her success—at the thought that, by this employment, she should be able to maintain herself, and no longer be a burden on

Harold; and this would have made her happy, had she not been anxious about her father. On reaching home, she found that Harold, too, had good news. The tale he had recently contributed to the non-paying periodical had, on its publication, attracted so much notice, that he had been invited to furnish one weekly, at the stipendiary price of a guinea; and this small beginning, after so many failures, seemed a key to fame and fortune. Nor did it appear more promising to Harold than to Amy, who, indeed, felt so proud of his success, that, for the moment, she almost forgot her own.

"Now, you'll rise to be a great man, Harold," she said, as they sat talking after their frugal supper. "I'm so glad, so glad! And, when you are famous, you won't forget Amy, whom you have protected and supported!"

"Forget my little sister—never!" exclaimed Harold, with a glance beaming affection.

"But I'm not your sister, Harold."

"I shall always regard you as one."

"But how can you, when I'm not?" persisted Amy, rather warmly.

"Well, well, you're not, then," said Harold, smiling.

"You know I don't like to be called out of my name, Harold, that's all," returned Amy. "But I'll forgive you now, because you smile, and it's so pleasant to see you smile again."

Thus they talked and thus lived, the young man, just entered on life, and the young girl, so beautiful, so innocent, and already—in thought and feeling, though not in appearance—a woman! Harold felt she was indeed a precious charge, as well on her own account as her father's—the father who, from the bars of his prison, confided her to his affection and his honour.

CHAPTER XVI.

MYSTERIES OF INTRIGUE.

PRECISELY at eight o'clock next morning Amy presented herself at the bonnet shop, and was met, as she entered, by Miss Sparkins, who was already as smart as a new pin.

"You're punctual, my dear," said the old lady, taking her hand. "So much the better. Punctuality's business—the soul of it! Now come in, and have breakfast; and then we'll see what's to be done."

Accordingly, after breakfast, Amy was regularly installed in her duties, the first and not least important of which was to assist the other young ladies, as they were politely designated by Miss Sparkins, in furnishing, or, as it was technically called, dressing the window. She soon learnt the art, and, becoming an immediate favourite with her colleagues, was initiated by them in all their little mysteries. Her desire was to please; and Miss Sparkins, already won by her gentleness and docility, was charmed by her assiduity and attention. She had waited on several customers, when, just after noon, a carriage drove up, and set down a lady, whose beauty and *distingué* appearance attracted special notice. But Rosalie—for it was she—no longer wore her former gay air. The flight of Eleanor had given her a shock, which two months of remorse and mental distraction had aggravated rather than diminished, and she was still suffering from its effect. Her previous resolution to struggle with her attachment to Danvers had gained strength and root. In truth, she was alarmed at

the dangerous influence he had acquired over her, and to which she every hour more readily yielded; at the same time, she recalled, with poignant self-reproach, the declarations she had permitted him to make, and the encouragements he might boast she had offered. Now her good genius once more struggled in her heart, as in a fastness, against a potent adversary without, and treacherous feelings within; and, doubtful of her resolution to continue the contest, she sought safety in retreat. While Danvers held only too dear a place in her memory, she would not, from this moment of reflection, admit him to her presence, and, whenever he called, he was met by excuses and evasions. To her surprise, and, perhaps, her mortification, he immediately discontinued his visits, much to the disappointment of Sir Blundell, who had from the first taken a fancy to him, and now doubly felt his absence. He retained a friend, too, in Mrs. Addlefield, the more as, hating everything grave, she was disgusted at Rosalie's low spirits, which she attributed entirely to this alienation, and hence was continually proposing his recall.

Thus, as we have said, two months had passed, when Rosalie, as she alighted at Miss Sparkins's door, saw Danvers coming up the road on horseback; and hastily took refuge in the shop.

"The bonnet is not quite finished, my lady," said Miss Sparkins, coming forward to meet her; "but it will be ready in a few minutes, or I'll send it, if you don't like to wait."

"I can't wait," replied Rosalie, agitatedly—for she heard the door open, and felt that it had admitted Danvers. "Pray let some one bring it who can take directions, in case Mrs. Addlefield should wish it to be altered. The little girl there will do." And she made a gesture at Amy.

Danvers—for he had indeed entered the shop—mechanically followed her eye, and his glance kindled as he recognised Amy. But he quickly turned to Rosalie.

"Are you going to pass me?" he said, as she was moving away.

Rosalie's trembling knees almost bent beneath her.

"You have been ill," pursued Danvers, with dissembled emotion, as she held out her hand, and meeting it with a tender pressure. "They told me so, and now I see it was true. For pity's sake, say you are better."

Rosalie felt the colour once more in her cheek: the moth was again circling the flame.

"I'm a good deal better to-day, thank you," she said.

"How long it is since I have seen you!"

"Not so long! It is but a few weeks."

"There are times when weeks seem years—years of misery, suffering, and despair. Now, don't frown upon me—don't be angry, and I'll be silent. But if you knew how uneasy, how anxious I have been!" And his fine dark eyes said more than his words.

"How could I think you would be anxious, when there was so little cause!" replied Rosalie, both her tone and look, and, alas! her poor frail heart, insensibly softening. "But I must really say adieu," she added, as if awakening to her danger.

"Let me first engage your interest for some one here," rejoined Danvers. And he turned with a smile to Amy. "You ought really to know this little beauty. She's the daughter of one of Sir Blundell's clerks—the poor fellow who is in prison, and whom I went to some time ago about young Arkworth, you know."

"Oh, indeed!" smiled Rosalie, her good-nature really aroused. "And so you're Mr. Brookman's daughter."

"Yes, ma'am," replied Amy.

"And do you like being here?"

"Very much."

"Perhaps we may get something better for you, if it's not interfering with Miss Sparkins. But you're coming out to me, and then we can talk it over." And with another kindly smile, she moved towards the door, attended by the sedulous Miss Sparkins, who, as usual, was all politeness and attention.

"And now we're parting for two months more," said Danvers, mournfully, as Rosalie took her seat in the carriage.

"I have not said so," replied Rosalie.

"But you intend it."

Rosalie was silent.

"What have I done to offend you?"

"Nothing."

"Then, why do you so torture, so distract me? Cruel! capricious! you have blighted my happiness, and now you drive me to despair."

And before she could reply he turned away.

In reality he was impatient to be gone, as, from the moment he had caught sight of Amy, his thoughts were intent on another object, and he was too familiar with the character of Rosalie, in all its little weaknesses and defects, not to feel confident that their accidental rencontre had made an impression upon her. He sprang on his horse, and threading his way to the City, passed down Chancery Lane to Cursitor Street, where he alighted, and giving his steed to his groom, plunged into Chichester Rents, glided through a dark doorway to a darker staircase, and stopped before a room on the upper floor. Knocking, the door was opened by Hawker.

"You, baronet!" exclaimed the minion of the law, in surprise.

"Yes."

"Well, I haven't found the girl. I've searched everywhere, but she's off somewhere with the young chap, and can't get a trace of them."

"I've found her myself."

"You have!"

"She's employed at a bonnet shop in Bond Street; here's the address. But she's going this afternoon to Kensington, to Nampced House. I'll contrive that she shall be detained there till dusk. You must meet her as she comes away, decoy her into a carriage, and take her off as we arranged."

"Consider it done, baronet."

"If she resists you, you know how to act—a little chloroform. But no violence—*mind that!*"

"Never fear. She'll take no hurt with me." And Hawker chuckled, whether at the idea of his own harmlessness, or Amy's resistance, did not appear.

Amy, unconscious of danger, was, precisely at this moment, setting out for Kensington, charged with Mrs. Addlefield's bonnet. At parting, Miss Sparkins gave her particular injunctions to make haste back, so as to be home before dusk, and placing some money in her hand, directed her to return by the omnibus. Amy was eager to show how active and prompt she could be. She soon reached Kensington, and, presenting herself at the entrance to the great house, was admitted by the porter, and was waiting in the hall, when Lady Haughton, who had made some calls on her way, arrived.

Rosalie swept past as if she had never seen her before, and, in truth, her heightened colour, and something of *distrait* in her glance, showed that her thoughts were wholly pre-occupied. As lovers grow more fond after a quarrel, so her casual meeting with Danvers had brought back to

her mind a thousand tender recollections, recalling, reviving, and perhaps fostering her first attachment. She now thought she had been too ungracious to him—that she had, as he reminded her, done him a great injury, and that, if she could not make reparation, she at least owed him forbearance. Thus she blinded and deluded herself, unconscious that the appetite of her imagination grew by what it fed on.

As she passed up the hall, an attendant presented her with a billet, and recognising the hand of Danvers, Rosalie instantly opened it, and read as follows:—

"I send this express to the kindest of hearts. I am very much concerned for the poor man whose daughter you have just seen. As she is going out to you, will you keep her until I come, as I want to ask her some questions about him? We must try to save him, if only for the poor girl's sake. "D."

The note put Rosalie in spirits—such mysteries are women! and she who had for two months shut herself up from temptation, now, in a moment of weakness, embraced the first occasion to relapse. There could be no harm in receiving him once, she thought—on a mission of kindness too; *so like him!* so worthy of him!

"Come with me, child," she said to Amy, and her smile was a brighter one this time—again gladdening the young girl.

Amy followed to a room opening on the terrace. An elderly lady, who was reading at the fire, looked round as they entered.

"Here's your bonnet, mamma," cried Rosalie, "and something still more pretty—the little handmaid who brought it."

"Psha, Rosalie!" said Mrs. Addlefield, petulantly; "how can you talk in such a childish strain?"

Rosalie laughed, and it was so long since she had laughed, that Mrs. Addlefield looked up with surprise. "I thought you didn't like my being so grave," she said. "But you can't deny she is pretty, and you'll be interested when you know who she is. Her father is the poor man at the banking-house, whom they have sent to prison."

This intelligence, if it interested, did not propitiate Mrs. Addlefield, who turned on Amy with a scowl.

"And so," she said, "you're the daughter of that horrid man, who wants to get up insurrections and rebellions and revolutions, and to take away everybody's money and give it to those who have none. I should be ashamed of being the daughter of such a person. He can have no religion, I'm sure."

Amy looked rather frightened, but made no reply; and Rosalie hastened to interpose.

"Don't say any more, mamma, pray," she said, in the same low tone. "I shouldn't have brought the child in, if I'd known. But I won't have her affronted. I've taken a fancy to her, and so has Danvers."

"Danvers!" replied Mrs. Addlefield, a gleam of intelligence passing over her face, as if Rosalie's unwonted vivacity were explained. "Oh! that alters the case. And now I look at her, the girl is not amiss. There, sit down," she added to Amy, with a benignant smile. "We mustn't be angry with you, on account of your father. No, no! that would not be just. But send the bonnet up to my room, Rosalie, dear; I'll look at it there." And she swept out of the apartment.

"Am I to wait any longer, ma'am?" asked Amy, as the door closed on herself and Lady Haughton.

"A little while," replied Rosalie. "The gentleman you saw with me in town—Sir Everard Danvers, you

know—wishes you to remain till he comes. We both feel very much concerned for you and for your father, and Sir Everard may be able to do something for him."

"Oh! I should be so grateful, if he would!" exclaimed Amy, her heart reproaching her for her previous repugnance to so kind a friend as Danvers.

Her words, uttered in a tone subdued by emotion, were unheeded by Rosalie, who had involuntarily recurred to her own relations with Danvers, and, as she stood meditating, he appeared at the window before her.

"Sir Everard Danvers!" she exclaimed, as he entered, startled and a little terrified at this clandestine approach. "How did you come in?"

"By the garden door," replied Danvers. "Pardon me; but I have been so often told you were indisposed at the front door, and so prevented from seeing you, that having now, as I believed, your permission to come, I made use of the private entrance, the key of which I have had for some time, though I have never availed myself of it before."

"There is not the least occasion to do so," answered Rosalie, agitatedly, but still speaking in a low tone: "so pray always come to the front door, or it may excite remark; and you may be assured the visits of Sir Everard Danvers can never be unwelcome, so long as we can include him among our *friends*."—And she laid a stress on her last word.

"Not to you, I hope," replied Danvers. "Could I think so, it would indeed drive me to desperation—to madness. But do not deceive yourself—they are unwelcome to Sir Blundell."

"I'm sure you are mistaken," said Rosalie, her colour rising. "But we will not say any more now, before the child. You had better speak to her at once, and let her go."

"That is what I wish," replied Danvers. And he

added to Amy—"I want to see if I can be of any use to your father, Miss Brookman. You know he's in a dangerous position, but you may not be aware that the evidence against him is very strong and conclusive."

"I have heard so, sir," answered Amy, dejectedly. "Oh! can you help him, sir! can you save him!"

"I don't know yet," returned Danvers; "but perhaps something may be done. Indeed, a clever lawyer may do a good deal, and I will instruct one to take up his case, and carry it through."

Amy's hopes, which had been resting on some secret intercession with the Government—an influence her father would have spurned—now all vanished. "Ah, sir, he has a lawyer," she said; "but I hear he does not speak hopefully. What he needs, is some powerful friend."

"Poor child!" said Rosalie, touched by her earnestness. "He has a zealous advocate in you."

"Oh! we won't give him up!" remarked Danvers. "He shall not want supporters; but, first, he must get rid of this lawyer, and I'll set mine to work—a man who knows everything."

"I'll tell my father, sir," said Amy; "but I think he would like to keep his present adviser. He seems to have confidence in him."

"A clever fellow, eh?" rejoined Danvers. "What's his name?"

"Smart, sir."

"Smart!" exclaimed Danvers, as if stung. "Smart!"

But, at this moment, attention was diverted by the entrance of Mrs. Addlefield, who appeared a little discomposed.

"Sir Blundell has come home," she observed. "I heard his voice in the hall, and I think he's coming here."

Rosalie looked disconcerted.

"I don't want him to see me," said Danvers, turning towards the French window.

"Here he is," murmured Mrs. Addlefield; "and he'll see you passing the other window. Step behind the screen."

Danvers obeyed, and, as he disappeared, the door opened, and Sir Blundell entered.

The baronet, after an interval of a couple of months, still wore the same troubled look described on his last appearance; but he was thinner and paler.

"You have returned early," said Rosalie, breaking an embarrassing pause.

"Yes, I've got a clue," was the reply.

"To what?" exclaimed Rosalie, uneasily, while Mrs. Addlefield averted her head.

"To dear Eleanor," replied Sir Blundell.

"Oh!" said Mrs. Addlefield.

"And where is she?" asked Rosalie, eagerly.

"That I don't know," replied Sir Blundell; "but I hope to hear of her at Manchester."

"You are going there, then?"

"Yes, as quickly as I can—in fact, directly."

"But you've not dined," urged Rosalie. "You mustn't go till after dinner. Come into your own room, and I'll have something up for you at once."

"It's no use—no use, Rosalie," said the baronet, in a faltering voice; "you know I can't eat."

Rosalie's heart smote her. "You'll take something with me, I'm sure," she said, tenderly, and turning her arm through his; "come." And she led him from the room. Mrs. Addlefield followed, after telling Amy to wait in the hall.

Danvers, an impatient auditor of what passed, stopped till all was quiet, when coming forth, he found the room empty.

It was now dusk, and he glided on to the terrace, by the same window that had afforded him admission, without fear of being observed. He was apprehensive that, through the unlucky arrival of Sir Blundell, Amy would have left the house before she could be intercepted by Hawker, and thus frustrate their nefarious scheme. This made him quicken his pace, in order that he might personally observe what was going on.

Amy quitted the mansion, by the front door, almost at the same moment that he emerged from its rear. Between the gate and the road was a long lane, having on one side a few houses and gardens, and on the other the boundary wall of Sir Blundell's grounds; but though it was very lonely—for a drizzling rain had come on with dusk, and there seemed to be no one about—she felt no misgiving. But she had proceeded only about half-way up the lane, when a man muffled in a cloak darted from behind a projection, and caught her in his arms.

"Ha! is it you, my little dear?" he said, as she struggled to free herself. "Come, come; don't be frightened; I'm not going to hurt you."

"Then, why do you pinch me so?" said Amy, with presence of mind repressing a cry that rose to her lips. "Let go my hands."

"Well, if you'll be quiet, I will," replied the man, loosening his grasp.

With the spring of a deer, Amy bounded from him, and her cry of distress rang in the air. She heard a response; she saw a tall figure coming towards her; and she fell panting on his breast.

"Amy! my Amy!" exclaimed her deliverer, pressing her in his arms. "How is this? Who has molested you?"

"Oh! Harold! is it you?" replied the girl, in breath-

less accents. "But are we safe?" And she looked round, with a startled glance, but there was no one within view.

"You're quite safe, Amy. What has been the matter?"

"A man frightened me, but, as you say, I'm safe now; for I am with you."

"There, stop and take your breath; for you seem to have lost it all. I wish I could see the fellow who alarmed you, but he's got off. And how is it you are out here, Amy?"

"I came on a message to Nampced House. Were you going there, Harold?"

"Yes, I thought I would call and ask the porter if anything had been heard of Miss Haughton."

Poor Amy! she had taken comfort in the thought that it was herself, not Eleanor, whom Harold had been thinking of—that, in short, he had called for her at Miss Sparkins's, and, hearing where she had gone, had come out to escort her home. She did not like Eleanor engrossing all his thoughts, and felt so disappointed, and so humbled, that, for a minute or two, she made no reply.

"Perhaps, you'd like to turn back, and inquire about Miss Haughton, Harold?" she then said, with a little pique; "and I can go on."

"And do you think I could leave you, Amy?" replied Harold, "particularly after your being molested. No, no; I must come and fetch you home every night."

Amy was quite pacified by this speech, and chatted all the way home, unconscious of the muffled figure that, like an evil shadow, dogged her to the threshold.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE FUGITIVE.

For once, Lawyer Smart was embarrassed. As the day approached for Brookman's trial, he acquired, by his pertinacious assertion of right, a brief summary of the fresh evidence to be adduced against the prisoner, though the name of the accusing witness was still withheld. With a lawyer's astuteness, however, he had fixed on Hawker as the man, and this had not increased his confidence in the testimony, but, in respect to facts, it was of so decisive a character, that he could see no chance of setting it aside. He was sorely troubled at this prospect for three reasons—first, from a natural feeling for the cause of his client; secondly, because, apart from this, he had begun to take a friendly interest in Brookman; and, thirdly, on account of some old transactions with Hawker, by which he knew him to be a rascal and a knave.

Making his way along Holborn to his hotel, after a protracted conference with Brookman, he turned these facts over and over in his mind, as if all his faculties were engaged in their solution; yet, as he progressed, his alert eye seemed to scan every face, and noté every object. Suddenly he encountered a sweep, who instantly wheeled round, dived into a court, and threw himself into the labyrinth of slums that lies at the back of Holborn. On he went, up one passage and down another, and round again, by a maze perfectly bewildering, his head lowered, and never venturing to look behind, till, at last, he found him-

self at the bottom of a blind alley, from which there was no outlet. Then he turned round, and beheld Lawyer Smart. The piercing eye was upon him, and the sweep stood at bay.

"I won't be took alive," he said, snatching a clasp-knife from within his jacket. "I'll cut my throat first."

"Who's going to take you?" answered the lawyer, composedly.

"What have you followed me for, then?" said the sweep, desperately.

"Because I want you."

"Yes, to give me up to the beaks!"

"Not if you're tractable. There, put up your knife, and come on after me. And remember, if you attempt to make off, I'll give the alarm directly, and nothing can save you."

Though the lawyer never troubled himself to look round, the sweep followed him up the alley, as quietly and resignedly as if led by a chain; and traversing two or three courts, they emerged before a public-house, which Smart, after a rapid glance at its exterior, entered, and led the way to a small gloomy back parlour, where he motioned the sweep to a seat.

"You're starving," he said. And as the waiter appeared, he ordered refreshments, which were quickly supplied, in the shape of cold meat and beer. The bleared eyes of the sweep, which hitherto had been riveted on Smart, as if under the fascination of a cockatrice, suddenly fastened on the food, and at a gesture from the lawyer, he seized it like a wolf, and ate voraciously.

"That will do," said Smart, when, at length, the cleared dish brought him to a stand. "Now we'll have a word or two. When did you escape from Norfolk Island?"

"A year ago," replied the sweep, sullenly, and with reluctance.

"Did you come straight to England?"

"No, I was in the bush a while: then a ship came along the coast, and I got on board, and worked my passage."

"And how long have you been here?"

"About a week."

"I needn't ask you how you live. Every man to his hobby! We're all mad on one point, and yours is thieving."

"I haven't thieved yet. But what can I do? I've tried to get a job of sweeping, or anything, just to buy a bit of bread; but I can't: so I suppose I must thieve again."

"Answer me one question, and if you want to be honest, I'll help you."

"Just the same question you asked at the 'sizes, five years ago!"

"Ah! you've got a good memory, I see; so much the better! Well, there's not much difference in the questions. What I then wanted was the name of your accomplice in the burglary at Seaford Nest. Not long afterwards, I thought I traced him, and I wish to know if I'm right."

"What's the use of rakin' up that? I wouldn't tell it then, and why should I tell it now?"

"Because if you do, I'll make it worth your while; and if you don't I'll denounce you to the police as an escaped convict."

"Who do you say it was, then?" said the sweep, surlily.

"My clerk, Ned Hawker."

"And you found that out! Well, there's no use concealin' it, after so many years. It was Hawker."

Smart drew out his purse. "There are five sovereigns for you," he said. "They'll set you up as a sweep, and give you a chance of doing. If I find you deserve more, you shall have it."

The sweep looked at the five bright pieces, shining in his black hand like a treasure; and they seemed to throw a light, momentary but clear, on a treasure of human feeling still masked in his heart.

"If this hand ever thieves again, I'll cut it off," he said.

Smart shook his head. "It's your point," he said: "we're all touched, one way or another. But where shall I hear of you, when I want you?"

"At the 'Bag of Nails,' in Gravel Lane."

"Very good," replied the lawyer. And without further adieu, he quitted the room and the house.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE TRIAL.

RUMOUR had been so busy with the charges to be brought against Brookman, and the important revelations by which they were to be supported, that public curiosity was excited in an extraordinary degree, and all sections of the political world looked forward to the result with eager interest. It was well understood that the Government intended to strain every nerve to obtain a conviction, in the hope that, by a timely exercise of rigour, they would disconcert, if not shatter, the daily increasing party of the

Chartists, and perhaps put an end to a troublesome agitation. The impression that he was to be made a victim excited a sympathy for Brookman, even among opponents of his principles, but it aroused deeper feelings among his compatriots, composed of a class strong in its attachments, ever distrustful of the interference of the authorities, and regarding the captive Chartist as their especial advocate and champion.

These influences combined to attract to the Old Bailey an immense concourse on the morning of the trial, and not only the court itself, but the stairs and passages, and even the street outside, were, from an early hour, thronged with people. The interior formed a solemn, if not imposing scene. The eminent judge on the bench was venerable alike in appearance and character. At his feet, like pillars of the seat of justice, sat several of the most distinguished members of the legislature, come to be auditors of this important trial; and the body of the court, the galleries, the lobbies, presented a sea of faces, largely infused with the stiff wigs and long robes of the bar. An eminent counsel had been engaged to defend the prisoner, who himself, by his striking appearance and bearing, attracted universal attention. He was, indeed, contemplated with far other feelings by two of the spectators, standing in different parts of the court: the one, Danvers; the other, Hawker, on whose testimony he was to be condemned. The traitor was glaring at his dupe, when a voice behind whispered in his ear; and his lips paled as, turning round, he recognised Smart. But the lawyer was already moving away.

After some preliminaries, the Attorney-General, as the public prosecutor, opened the case against the prisoner, forcibly setting forth his alleged offence. This, he asserted, would have warranted an indictment for treason, but the

Government had taken a more merciful course, and was content to convict him of conspiracy. That the unfortunate man in the dock was but too guilty, would be proved by the clearest evidence—by the voice, among others, of one of his confederates, who, shocked at the desperate character of his machinations, had come forward, in the interest of the country and society, to place the Government on its guard, and would this day prove the existence of a formidable and extensively organised conspiracy, of which the prisoner was the head and front. The learned functionary then burst into a vehement denunciation of the prisoner, and concluded a long harangue by calling on the jury, in the most urgent terms, to mark their sense of his crime by a verdict of guilty, which, consigning him to the judgment of the law, would relieve the country of his presence for the remainder of his life.

The immediate effect of this speech was to confirm rather than diminish the popular leaning towards Brookman, and the eagerness shown to obtain his condemnation strengthened all the previous impressions. Every one was impatient for the advent of the informer, whose disclosures were so vaunted; and two secondary witnesses—one a policeman, who had attended the Chartist meetings in plain clothes, and the other, a sworn short-hand writer—were scarcely listened to. Both, however, testified to strong, and even violent language used by Brookman, and though, on cross-examination, they admitted that he had deprecated an appeal to arms, their evidence was still such as to give a colour to the more serious charge.

The moment had now arrived for the production of the principal witness, and, as the Attorney-General pronounced the name of Hawker, the prisoner stood more erect, and looked defiantly at the witness-box. Indeed, Brookman had till this instant doubted the treachery of

Hawker, but, once convinced, his scorn made him insensible to any other feeling, and, at the same time, gave him an air almost heroic. Others watched for the appearance of Hawker with conflicting emotions—Danvers, from his obscure seat in the gallery, with exultation; Harold and Amy with fear and dread. Amy could not still the wild beatings of her heart during the pause that ensued. There was evidently some agitation in the court; officers moved to and fro; and one was observed whispering to the Attorney-General. The latter, become the centre of all eyes, rose in an excited manner, while a profound silence pervaded the hall of justice, none could tell why.

"My lord," he cried, addressing the Judge, "I have to make an extraordinary statement. The principal witness for the Crown has mysteriously quitted the court, and cannot be found."

A murmur of surprise broke from the audience, but was instantly suppressed.

"Under these circumstances," pursued the Attorney-General, "my learned friend, Serjeant Wetheram, the able counsel for the prisoner, will no doubt consent that the trial should be adjourned till to-morrow."

But Serjeant Wetheram would consent to no such arrangement. How could the Attorney-General, who had exhibited the greatest vindictiveness towards the prisoner, expect that he would? The mere proposition was an affront to justice, and insulting to common sense.

"Such a course would be unprecedented," said the judge. "The trial must proceed."

The solemnity of his voice and manner communicated itself to the multitude, and, reminding them of the sanctity of the place, checked the applause that many all but expressed.

"Then, my lord," said the Attorney-General, warmly, "I shall call no further evidence on the part of the prosecution."

With these words, he gave place to Serjeant Wetheram, whose reputation as a popular pleader would at any time have secured him an eager hearing, but now hushed every breath. His speech was, indeed, both eloquent and persuasive. In earnest and glowing language he stigmatised the charge against his client as a bugbear, got up by the Government to frighten and delude the public. He bitterly ridiculed the attempt to prove the existence of a conspiracy, declared that the means resorted to for this purpose were unconstitutional and illegal, and contended that they had utterly failed to adduce even a particle of proof. As for the principal witness, he knew better than to present himself, for he was prepared to show that he could not be believed; and he felt confident, from a careful review of the whole case, that the innocence of his client would be established, and that he would leave the dock an unblemished man.

Again there was a lull in the court, and the Judge, having hastily run over his notes, was about to sum up, when the foreman of the jury intimated that they had agreed on a verdict.

"And what is your verdict, sir?" asked the Judge.

"Not guilty, my lord."

"Not guilty!" was echoed around; and, the popular feeling becoming uncontrollable, a cheer burst simultaneously from every lip, rang out through the crowded passages, and was caught up in the street. A sullen turnkey, who was standing by the side of the dock, raised the bar, and Brookman stepped forth free.

"Father! dear father!" cried Amy, with an hysteric sob, as she sprang to meet him.

Brookman pressed her to his heart, while, with a smile of joy, he held out his hand to Harold.

"This is a happy deliverance," said Harold, heartily; "and still more so, if you will take it as a warning."

"Warning!" murmured Brookman. "Well, well, we'll not talk of it now. And here's my honest Manchester friend, too!—friend indeed!"

"Glad to see you right again, friend," said Silas Baines, returning his cordial grasp. "And what do you think of Lawyer Smart. I tell you, he's a wonderful clever chap is Lawyer Smart."

There was a man passing at the time whe thought so, too. It was Sir Everard Danvers.

CHAPTER XIX.

RIDING THE HIGH HORSE.

Sir Blundell Haughton's journey in search of Eleanor proved fruitless. The clue to which he clung, whether right or wrong, terminated at Manchester, and all his perseverance could glean nothing further. Thus he returned to town more hopeless than ever.

Nevertheless, Eleanor was, in truth, not very distant from the scene of his inquiries. She had made her way to Gainsford, a town of small extent, but still the seat of several manufactures. Her romance, as we have before shown, was largely blended with judgment, which, though it could not overrule, tempered and toned it; and this led her to the conclusion that the best field for her peculiar

talents was the busy manufacturing district, where she would, at the same time, be removed from the chance of meeting her previous acquaintances, and, consequently, be less exposed to recognition.

Taking the name of Staveley, the maiden designation of her mother, she engaged apartments in a respectable cottage, and, by an advertisement in a local paper, announced herself as a teacher of music. She was prepared to meet delay, but, sanguine and inexperienced, felt confident of overcoming the obstacles to success. These, however, were of no ordinary kind. First, there was the jealousy always evinced towards a stranger on making a lodgment in a country town; secondly, she could produce no testimony to her character and ability; thirdly, her sudden arrival, with the mystery of her youth and superior manners, excited both remark and suspicion. But the propriety of her behaviour gradually inspired respect; slanderous tongues grew weary of surmises when they were unable to allege any facts; and the young girl was permitted to live unmolested and unnoticed.

Meanwhile, as time passed on, and brought her no pupils, she grew alarmed at the condition of her resources. These were from the first but humble—in fact, merely the balance of her quarter's allowance, and little more than a change of clothes. The chivalrous spirit which often led her to the verge of indiscretion, and, in this instance, even over it, at the same time preserved her from any act that could, in a stricter point of view, expose her to reproach, and hence she left behind all her jewels and trinkets, with the exception of her watch, conceiving that, though nominally hers, they virtually belonged to her father, while, on the other hand, she felt proud to rely for support on her industry and talents.

She was meditating one morning over her rapidly

declining funds, when her landlady presented her with a note, which had just been left at the cottage. It was from a Mrs. Mayburn, the wife of a mill-owner in the neighbourhood, stating that she had seen Miss Staveley's advertisement, and would be glad to have some conversation with her on the subject, requesting her to call at Mayburn House, any day before two.

Eleanor was overjoyed, and set out directly. Mr. Mayburn, a self-made man, such as may be often met in the manufacturing districts, was the most opulent, if not most important, of the local magnates, and his colossal mill was one of the sights of the place. Near it stood his residence, a commodious villa, sumptuously and even tastefully furnished—for the task had been confided to a first-rate London upholsterer; and the house had every attraction that great wealth and a lavish expenditure could procure.

A walk of three miles brought Eleanor to the door, and she was instantly ushered into Mrs. Mayburn's presence.

Mrs. Mayburn was a homely and elderly lady, who had been a factory girl, and, like her husband, was self-trained and self-educated. She was adding up her housekeeping accounts as Eleanor entered; her husband was writing at an adjacent devonport; and their daughter, Phœbe, a pretty and graceful girl, was engaged reading.

"Are you Miss Staveley?" asked Mrs. Mayburn, with some surprise, as Eleanor presented herself.

"Yes," replied Eleanor.

"Then, I'm very sorry you've had the trouble to come. You probably thought your pupil was to be a little girl. This is my daughter—" and she made a gesture at Phœbe. "She requires a teacher at least older than herself, which you are not."

"I hope this will not be an insurmountable objec-

tion," said Eleanor, exchanging a glance of interest with Phœbe.

"Well, Miss Mayburn is already a tolerable player, and only wants a little instruction from an expert hand."

Eleanor bowed, and was retiring, when she was arrested by Mr. Mayburn, who had once or twice eyed her askance, without relinquishing his writing.

"Since you are here, young lady, you may as well play a tune," he said. "It's a bad plan to turn away goods, without seeing a sample."

This was the very thing Eleanor desired. She was confident of the result, could she but display her skill; and, in a moment, she was seated at the pianoforte, and her taper fingers, with their delicate touch, struck its chords like a spell of power. Neither Mr. Mayburn nor his wife had any refined perceptions of the melodious science, but they felt the presence of genius; and when Eleanor, playing from memory, accompanied the music with her voice, her triumph was complete. Phœbe could not restrain her enthusiasm, and expressed it in applause.

"Yes, Miss Staveley plays well—very well!" said Mr. Mayburn. "I'm sorry your mother thinks her youth such an objection. We don't stand for that in the mill, if we find a quick hand; but there we go on a different principle."

"I thought our principles were the same," remarked Mrs. Mayburn, deprecatingly.

"I'm sure Miss Staveley is as old as I am, mamma," cried Phœbe: "quite old enough! I couldn't bear to be under a governess again; and should like some one of my own age."

"Well, my dear, I'm not going to oppose you," replied the indulgent mother. "I am quite satisfied of Miss Staveley's ability, and that is all we require."

Mr. Mayburn, perhaps content with having put the matter in train, had retired to his devonport, and his wife was left to complete the arrangement, which was soon effected, and it was agreed that Phœbe should receive her first lesson on the following morning.

At the appointed time, Eleanor arrived, and found Phœbe alone.

"I'm so glad you've come!" she cried, receiving her with great cordiality. "But how can you be so punctual? I was afraid you'd not be here for some time. I'm such a loiterer myself, I always give an hour's grace."

"You have no pupils to attend," replied Eleanor, smiling.

"No, only a governess; and, I give you formal notice, I intend to impose on her dreadfully."

"Then, I see I must commence with a strict hand, and set to work at once. So sit down, and begin."

"But I want to ask you first if you know of any nice novels? You read all the new ones, of course?"

"I've not read any for some time."

"Oh, fie! Don't you subscribe to the library?"

"I postpone my answer till you've taken your lesson. Then, I'll make a frank confession."

"You're the most provoking, irresistible governess I ever knew. I see you will have your own way, and so I must submit."

But the lesson, prolonged by Phœbe's waywardness, had not terminated, when they were interrupted by a visitor, who proved to be Mr. Ashleigh, a landed proprietor in the neighbourhood, and one of Phœbe's admirers.

"I'm so much obliged to you for coming," said Phœbe, as they shook hands. "Now Miss Staveley will have to let me off."

"But," began the young man, bending to Eleanor, "if I interrupt you—"

"It doesn't matter a bit," cried Phœbe. "Miss Staveley must be quite tired, and I'm sure I am. But you're not going?" she added to Eleanor.

"Since you are determined not to play any more, there is no use in my staying," answered Eleanor, playfully.

"You must stop and lunch with us," returned Phœbe. "Mamma ordered me to keep you, and I must obey. Now, do, Mr. Ashleigh, go and stand before the door, and prevent any one from going out."

"Or coming in?" asked Ashleigh.

"Yes—or coming in!"

"There is not the least necessity for such a blockade," said Eleanor, gaily. "Your invitation is too welcome to be declined, and I shall be only too happy to remain."

"Then I suppose I need no longer keep guard?" said Mr. Ashleigh to Phœbe.

"No, you may sit down now."

"And there is only one thing wanting to render the adjustment complete," said Mr. Ashleigh.

"And what is that, pray?" asked Phœbe.

"That you should invite me to stop luncheon too."

"Did you ever hear such a modest suggestion?" said Phœbe to Eleanor. "Well," she added, "if you're good, and try all you can to amuse us, we'll permit you."

"Permit isn't the word—is it, Miss Staveley?" cried Ashleigh.

"As I'm not one of the high contracting parties, I can't say," replied Eleanor; "but we know that, coming from Miss Mayburn, the word will bear the kindest construction."

"I declare you're a flatterer," said Phœbe. "After such a compliment, I must be on my best behaviour, or I shall get no more pretty speeches. So I beg to say, squire,

you are specially invited to put up with our company for the rest of the day."

"Which means you will put up with mine," replied Ashleigh, laughing.

At this moment, a servant announced Captain Raffles, an officer in command of a recruiting party at Gainsford.

"Miss Mayburn, I've come to prepare you for a lecture, from our friend the curate," said the Captain, as he took a seat. "You were not at church on Sunday."

"How do you know that?" replied Phœbe.

"Because I looked up at your pew, as in duty bound, and didn't see you."

"I was more fortunate than you," said Ashleigh, with a little malice; "for I not only saw Miss Mayburn at church, but I had the honour of driving her there."

"Oh!" said the Captain, looking down.

"We went to the church in Ashleigh Park," said Phœbe. "Mamma wished to go, and as Mr. Ashleigh offered to call for us, we went together."

"Ah!" said the Captain, brightening. It was not, after all, such a settled case as he had feared. "Are you going to see the hounds turn off next week?" he added.

"Turn off, indeed!" replied Phœbe. "I always follow them."

"You don't know, perhaps," said Ashleigh, "that Miss Mayburn is the best horsewoman in the county, and will cross the country with any one."

"That's your sort," cried the Captain admiringly. "Splendid!"

Phœbe laughed. "You've never seen my hunter, have you?" she said.

"No."

"Then I must have your opinion of him. You're a judge, I think?"

"Rather."

"This way, then."

She proceeded to a French window, opening to the garden; and the Captain, evidently in a high flow of spirits, followed her out. Eleanor was rather disconcerted by the incident, the more so as she saw, from his troubled look, that it was far from pleasing to Mr. Ashleigh. There was an embarrassing pause, in the midst of which Phœbe reappeared at the window.

"Are you two not coming?" she said.

"You never asked us," replied Ashleigh, his vexation vanishing, as his eye fell on her bright face and flexile figure.

"And I don't intend to ask you, because you're so ceremonious," rejoined Phœbe. "I shall just allow you and Captain Raffles to go together, and so will Miss Staveley and I."

"I shall be most happy," said Eleanor, gliding to the window.

Ashleigh, chafed by Phœbe's flirtation with the Captain, and not quite pacified by her half overture of reconciliation, remained behind, though he longed to follow. Eleanor divined his wishes, and whispered them to Phœbe.

"I believe I must take you with us, after all, squire," Phœbe then said. "You know we shan't be able to get on without you."

Ashleigh smiled. "Would it were so!" he murmured. And they passed out together.

By Phœbe's desire, the Captain had gone round to the stable, and ordered the horse to be taken to the paddock, which, being approached by a little gate from the garden, only a few yards distant, they soon reached. The Captain appeared at the same moment, followed by the groom, leading the hunter.

"What have they put her saddle on for?" said Ashleigh. "You're not going to mount."

"Indeed I am, though," replied Phœbe. "Just stop a moment." She ran back to the house, but presently reappeared wearing her riding habit and hat.

"And what do you think of my horse, Captain?" she asked, patting the neck of the noble animal.

"She's a slasher," remarked the Captain, "but rather fresh. I don't much like your mounting her."

"Pray don't, if there is any risk," said Eleanor, in her anxiety taking Phœbe's hand, as if to hold her back.

"Never fear," said Phœbe. "I can't ride a quiet horse. I like one that skims the earth, as if he scarcely touched it —one that will leap a hedge, a fence, a ditch, or all three together and make nothing of it."

"That's your sort!" cried the Captain, rubbing his hands.

"Yes," exclaimed Ashleigh, his feelings as a lover and a sportsman equally touched. "There are few ladies have your seat on the saddle, Miss Mayburn, and perhaps few men: for when you're flying over the ground, you and the horse seem one being. It's a sight to see you, and a very grand sight too."

Phœbe laughed—a laugh clear and musical, like a soft-toned bell; then thrust her foot into the stirrup, and sprang on the horse like a sylph.

"Now pray take care!" said Eleanor, admonishingly.

"Good bye!" replied Phœbe.

The horse, from the first a little restiff, reared as she spoke, moving forward on its hind legs, and it was, indeed, as Ashleigh had said, a sight to see the young girl, a model of grace and beauty, her fair cheeks flushed with animation, her eyes beaming with vivacity, her long hair streaming from under her janty little hat, seated on the noble animal

as if she were part and parcel of it, while the horse reared and snorted in impotent fury. But suddenly, feeling the whisk of the whip, he darted off, dashed past the bewildered groom, and shot round the paddock. Eleanor trembled for Phœbe's safety, and the more as, in making a second circuit, she set the horse at a gate, and, to Eleanor's surprise, cleared it at a bound. This, however, was but half the achievement, and, the next moment, she came flying back, high over the gate. Ashleigh's eyes sparkled with pleasure, and he uttered a laudatory exclamation; while the Captain, who was of a more excitable temperament, took off his hat, and greeted the fair equestrian with a cheer. The noise frightened and enraged the horse. He tossed his head aloft, lashed his tail, and, after again rearing in the air, once more darted off. But what was the horror of the spectators to see him fly, not at a gate, but a high hedge, which almost overtopped himself. Eleanor, who had been so alarmed before, scarcely dared to breathe. She expected to see Phœbe thrown from her seat, and killed on the spot. Ashleigh and the Captain rushed forward, as if they shared her fears, and apprehended the same catastrophe. The event was but an instant in suspense. The horse rose like a feather, clove the air with his broad breast, threw his enormous stride over the hedge, and alighted on the other side. But the danger, if averted, was not over. He had received an impetus which could not be checked, and was no longer under control. Shaking his mane like a lion, he tore over the ploughed field, throwing up the loose earth, which he scarcely seemed to touch, in a thick shower. Expert as she was, Phœbe could not repress alarm, when she found herself powerless to arrest his flight, and with difficulty able to preserve her seat. The horse, slanting across the field, made for the high road, from which his course was watched with wonder by the pas-

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sengers, and this feeling was increased when, drawing near, he vaulted over the hedge, came lightly down, and rushed on. It was now evident he was running away with his rider; and several of the passers by threw themselves in the way, hoping to bring him up; but as the horse came flying on, his eyes starting from his head, his proud nostrils dilated, his mouth dripping with foam, their resolution failed, and they left him a clear course. None doubted, indeed, that he would be stopped at the turnpike, as the toll-keeper, seeing him approach, closed the gate; but what was a gate to the gallant hunter! He shot over it like an arrow, leaving the toll-keeper speechless and motionless. The shouts behind, the clatter of his hoofs on the hard road, the noise of pursuit far in the rear, aroused the village before him, and people rushed to their doors, as, with undiminished speed, he flew past, bearing the fair Mazeppa on his back. So swift was his progress that Phœbe could hardly draw breath. Powerless and terrified, she felt she could not much longer retain her seat, and clung desperately to the pummel. At this juncture the horse swung round, vaulted over a hedge, and made straight for a neighbouring fence. Phœbe, with a shudder, recognised the spot as Ashleigh Copse, which, masked by the fence, fell on the other side to a considerable depth, with the steepness of a precipice. Such a leap would, beyond all doubt, be fatal both to horse and rider, and she determined to throw herself off, as her only chance of escaping destruction. But her progress forward was quicker than her thoughts, and before she could clear her foot of the stirrup, the horse was at the fence. The poor girl gave herself up for lost, when a man sprang from behind a tree, caught the dangling rein, and with a cry of "wo-ho," brought the wild steed to a stand.

Flaked with moisture, and quivering in every muscle,

the horse seemed conscious of the danger he had escaped, and stood motionless and subdued. Phœbe was at first unable to speak; and her pale face indicated exhaustion as well as terror. But this was only the feeling of a moment; and joy at her escape, with the proud conviction that she had vanquished the stubborn spirit of her steed, gave back the bloom to her cheek, and lightness to her heart.

"Had you not better alight?" asked Harold Arkworth —for her deliverer was no other.

"Oh, no!" replied Phœbe; "that would undo all, and my charger would believe he had conquered." And as she spoke her bright eye swept over Harold with a look of interest.

"He had run away with you then, as I thought?"

"Yes."

"And is it not hazardous to continue your ride?"

"No, he'll be quiet now. You see, he's quite humble, and I would not give up riding him home for the world. It will be such a lesson for him. But how am I to thank you for interposing as you did, and thus saving us both?"

"Such a simple act merits no thanks, and I shall ever esteem myself fortunate for being at hand at the moment, But I would really recommend you to alight, and let me walk the horse back for you."

"There is no danger, I assure you," returned Phœbe, with a soft glance. "You shall see, how submissive he will be."

And with a friendly inclination of the head, she wheeled round, cantered across the field, and reached the highway through a gap in the hedge. She had not gone far, when, at a turn of the road, she encountered Ashleigh, also mounted, and coming along at a gallop. He uttered a cry of joy as he beheld her.

"I was going in search of you," he said, reining up at

her side, "but never expected to see you again alive. Why, you're a perfect heroine, and I should think Bucephalus here has found it out?"

"If he hasn't, I can give him another ride, you know," said Phœbe, gaily.

"But not such a ride as this morning," said Ashleigh, with a look in which affection was blended with admiration. "No! no! you've given us all a fright, and I believe Mrs. Mayburn will never let you mount him again."

"Does mamma know of it, then?"

"Oh, yes! and all Gainsford by this time."

"Then, we must hurry back, as mamma will be uneasy till she sees me."

"True."

They quickened their pace, and the little village which had just before beheld Phœbe in full career, and then Ashleigh in hot pursuit, was agape with wonder to see them both returning at a canter, and Phœbe, not only unhurt, but chatting gaily with the squire, to whom more than one good dame assigned her as a bride. Low were the curtseys she received in consequence, and her loving face and kind smile, which seemed to turn on all alike, produced a most favourable impression.

Phœbe burst into a merry laugh as she approached the turnpike, and caught sight of the toll-keeper.

"I must ask you to pay the gate for me," she said to Ashleigh; "for I had to jump it as I came out."

"That you did, miss—reg'lar tantivy!" cried the toll-keeper.

"Take it out of that," said Ashleigh, throwing him a sovereign; "and mind you drink Miss Mayburn's health."

"Ay, your honour, and yours, too!" was the reply. And he murmured to himself—"And success to you!"

At the gate of the paddock, they were met by Mrs. Mayburn, Eleanor, and the Captain—the latter, who was just prepared to follow Ashleigh in his search, rather disconcerted that the squire had had the good fortune to bring Phœbe back.

"My dear, dear child!" exclaimed Mrs. Mayburn, throwing her arms round the young girl, as she bent down to kiss her. "You are safe! safe!"

"Yes, dear mamma! I've only been riding the high horse."

She held out her hand to Eleanor, who pressed it affectionately.

"We have been so alarmed for you," said Eleanor; "but it is over now, and we will say no more till you have given us a full account of your adventure."

"Which I fully intend to do," replied Phœbe. "But first let us have luncheon. Come, mamma!"

And they all entered the house together.

CHAPTER XX.

AN EMBARRASSING RENCONTRE.

THE party was met in the hall by Mr. Somerville, the curate, a dark young man, rather short in stature, but having agreeable features, and a modesty of manner, that made an impression still more pleasing.

"I have just heard of your escapade," he said to Phœbe, as they shook hands, "and was in the greatest alarm for you, when I heard your voice at the door. It

is saying a great deal, but I don't know that I ever so rejoiced to hear it before."

Phœbe's reply was a silent pressure of the hand, sending a thrill through the poor curate's heart.

"You will stay and take luncheon with us, Mr. Somerville?" said Mrs. Mayburn.

This was the very thing the curate wished, and to his great joy, he found himself seated by the side of Phœbe.

"I understand you intend to give me a lecture," said Phœbe, apart, alluding to the Captain's remark on her absence from church.

"I!" said the curate, quite abashed. "Who can have given you such an impression? or, supposing I could be so presumptuous, what could I find in you requiring a lecture?"

His earnestness, and perhaps his implied praise, touched and pleased Phœbe.

"You'd be a gentle monitor, I'm sure," she said; "and so I hope if I ever do anything you don't like, you'll tell me of it. But it was not my fault that I was not at church on Sunday, as I went with mamma to Ashleigh. I was so sorry to be away when you preached; for your sermons tell us, if not what we are, what we ought to be, and always do us good."

The poor curate, so meek and simple-hearted, drank the poison of those sweet words with bated breath. But he strove with the weak feeling, and his abnegation triumphed.

"Could I think they did good—ay, ever so little, it would indeed be a comfort to me," he said. "But let me not talk of myself. You have made a new acquaintance, I see—Miss Staveley!"

"You know her, then?

"Only by name—just as we know all strangers who come to Gainsford."

"Oh! you must know more of her. You'll like her so much—I'm sure you will. She's so animated, and seems so amiable. And then you, who are musical, will appreciate her voice; for she sings like a bird—I could almost say, like an angel; but you won't allow that."

"Why, not?" said the curate. "As women come nearest to our ideas of perfection, they may, if they choose the good part, be angels on earth."

Phœbe looked an angel at that moment, to others than the poor curate, and the Captain grew impatient at their little conference, while Ashleigh, whom her flirtations always ruffled, felt mortified and piqued, but, affecting unconcern, devoted himself assiduously to Eleanor. Her sweet voice, her strong good sense, her vivacity and animation, which her improved position prompted and sustained, insensibly enchained him; and his eyes gradually opened to her dream-like beauty, less showy, but perhaps more perfect than Phœbe's. There was a bluff heartiness in Ashleigh, softened by the friction of his college days, and the polish of good society, which appreciated, while it instinctively divined and fathomed Eleanor's sterling qualities, and her delicacy of colouring and tone, now, by force of contrast, showed Phœbe to some disadvantage. He was interested, as Phœbe did not fail to observe, and perhaps was somewhat displeased that such was the case.

Eleanor returned to Gainsford with a lightened heart. The news of her engagement at Mrs. Mayburn's, like all items of country intelligence, was already promulgated over the town; and its effect was to procure her several other pupils, producing an income sufficient for her maintenance. This was a source of consolation and pride, as well as thankfulness; and, could she have divested herself

of solicitude about her father, she would have been happy. But her thoughts often turned to her forsaken home with anxiety and misgiving.

At such times she loved to seek some solitary place, where, shut within herself, she might recall the sunny days of the past—past so recently, when life flung no shadow over her path. The garden of her little cottage communicated with a lane, from which a wicket opened into the churchyard; and here, lured by the seclusion, she frequently came—in the daytime, with a book, at dusk with no companion but her thoughts. One fine evening she was tempted forth rather later than usual. A slight frost, bracing but hardly cold, just crisped the ground, giving all nature that pleasant freshness which her admirers love. The moon was high in the heavens, which spread their broad blue breast to her light, without interposing a cloud; yet, over the deep azure, gleamed a thousand stars, like a veil of spangles. It was just the night to fascinate a romantic temperament—such a night as Juliet might have looked for Romeo, had she lived in our northern clime; and Eleanor inhaled the fresh pure air with indefinable enjoyment.

As she stepped into the lane, she was rather startled by the appearance of a beggar, who, in a whining tone, solicited alms, and she was almost induced to turn back. But, giving the man a piece of silver, she walked on, reassured by seeing him proceed in the other direction. A few paces further brought her in front of the old church.

The hoary fabric, marked with the wear of centuries, stood up in the weird light like a phantom of ancient time, when Norman knight and Saxon franklin met in its porch, and knelt in its aisles. Both now slept beneath its pavement, while later generations, simple and peaceful rustics, or later still, hard mill-owners and overtasked operatives,

lay mouldering round, their green graves or ambitious tombs silent as themselves. A tall cedar stood near, black and solemn, like a mourner; and threw a bough over the path in a perfect arch, darkening all beneath. But Eleanor passed along with a light step, and, indeed, soothed by the quietude, the solemnity, and even the gloom. She reached her favourite spot, where a sunken wall, scarcely visible till it was approached, divided the sacred ground from a wide sweep of open country, spread like a Canaan before it. There she stood watching the landscape, marking each shadow, and tracing each familiar object, till a slight sound on the grass, like a subdued step, caused her to start round, and a man stood before her, whom she instinctively recognised as the beggar she had just relieved. Repressing her alarm, she stepped aside, hoping to gain the gate, but the ruffian anticipated her design, and intercepted her.

"Let me pass, or I'll call for assistance," said Eleanor, in constrained accents.

"Call, if you like," was the reply, "but before anybody comes, I'll have what I want."

"You want money!"

"Yes."

"Take what I have—" she dropped her purse into his hand—"and now let me pass."

"That ain't all," said the ruffian, savagely; "I must have all—watch, rings, nothin' comes amiss. It's no use hangin' back. I tell you I'll have 'em."

He made a spring at her; but Eleanor, emboldened by the earliness of the hour, and the vicinity of houses, struggled to escape, at the same time crying for help. This rendered her assailant more desperate, and, as she still resisted, he drew forth a knife, and, with an oath, threatened to kill her. But at this moment a step was

heard approaching, and flinging her aside, he sprang over the wall, and disappeared.

Breathless and exhausted, Eleanor flew towards the gate, and, in her way, met the approaching passenger, who proved to be Ashleigh.

"Miss Staveley!" he exclaimed. "But what is the matter? Have you been frightened?"

Eleanor could not speak for a moment: then, in broken accents, she intimated what had occurred.

"And the miscreant's got your purse!" said Ashleigh. "But I may overtake him."

And before she could speak, he darted off in the direction the thief had taken. Eleanor, as soon as she could find voice, entreated him to stop, but he was already out of hearing. She was now undecided whether to hasten home, or wait his return, and trembled to find herself alone. As she hesitated, Ashleigh came back, convinced, by a look round the churchyard, that the marauder had got of.

"He has escaped for the present," he said; "but if you can give a description of him, I'll set the police on his track, and search the whole county. I hope he has not hurt you."

"Not much," replied Eleanor; "only my wrists, which he grasped so tight, I thought they would be crushed. It was fortunate you happened to be near, or he might have killed me." And she shuddered as she thought of the knife, which the ruffian had brandished over her.

"Don't think of it any more," said Ashleigh, soothingly. "You are safe, and that is everything! But if I were an older acquaintance, I should venture to caution you not to be out alone at night unless it is in the town. Our country roads are unsafe at this time of year; and, I am

sure, none of your pupils would like you to incur danger on their account."

"I have no such excuse for being out," returned Eleanor, recovering herself. "I was tempted by the fine evening, and walked over towards the meadows to see my favourite landscape by moonlight."

Ashleigh, himself a lover of nature, though in its more rugged aspects, smiled at her romance, but yet with something of admiration.

"And you choose this place for your ramble!" he said. "You are not afraid!" and he looked round on the graves.

"Not of *them!*" replied Eleanor. "Have I not proved it is the living, not the dead, I should fear? But I must bid you good night."

"Not till I have seen you home," said Ashleigh—"that is, if you will accept my escort."

"If I may trouble you so much I shall be greatly obliged, for I confess this rencontre has dispersed all my courage."

Ashleigh, indeed, felt her hand tremble, as she placed it on his proffered arm, which, at that moment, would have defended her against a host. They had just reached the wicket, opening into the lane, when another lady and gentleman came up; and Eleanor was embarrassed to discover Phœbe and her father.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE DISAPPEARANCE.

On leaving the Court of the Old Bailey, Algernon Brookman stepped into the street in company with Harold, Silas Baines, and Lawyer Smart, an altered, but not a wiser man. Amy leant on his arm, but he seemed to forget her presence, and brought into the busy street the gloom of the prison.

"Here we part, friend," said Silas Baines, holding out his rough hand. "I've done my work in Babylon, and to-night I go back to Manchester."

"I wish I could go with you," replied Brookman; "but tell your honest folk I'll come soon, and if ever it will serve them I'll be ready to go to prison again."

"There may be a time for it, and then we must all go," answered Silas; "but you've done enough for once. Now, good-bye, friend."

They all bade him adieu; and Amy, knowing the part he had taken in her father's liberation, gave him such a grateful look, that it brought the tears into his eyes. He was made of a mixed material, that Manchester man—as if the rough worsted of his nature were veined with silk.

"And now you must say farewell to me," said Lawyer Smart, who had been talking apart to Harold; "and I want to take your young friend here away for an hour, and perhaps altogether."

"Ha!" said Brookman.

Amy, too, was startled, but said nothing.

"I will hasten back, and tell you the news, as soon as can," said Harold, in high spirits.

The lawyer took his arm, and they proceeded together up Ludgate Hill, while the Chartist and his daughter, more thoughtful than before, bent their steps to their humble lodging.

Striking off from the great urban artery, and passing the classic region of Paternoster, the lawyer brought Harold to Warwick Lane, where butchers' shops, vying with the intellectual stores of "the Row," offer their coarser food at every door, meat for body and soul in close communion. From this greasy and narrow thoroughfare, they dived into a small quadrangle, surrounded by an old and gloomy building, fronted with a tumble-down wooden gallery, and which Harold found was an inn.

The place was a curiosity, lying in the heart of London, but we know there are parts of that throbbing heart, in its very midst, that are stagnant. Here Harold marvelled to see a country wagon, such as he had read of in the pages of Smollett, resting horseless on its shafts, a lugger at anchor, and piled up so high, that it was a mystery how it had ever passed under the gateway. A group of graziers and butchers were hanging round the tap, and an ostler, ancient and quaint as the inn itself, was making a desperate attempt to sweep the yard, which was almost choked with wet straw and mud. Over this area, Harold followed Smart into a dark passage, whence they emerged into a room, looking out on the same agreeable prospect.

A man of middle age, short and thick-set, but restless as an eel, was packing a carpet-bag at the table.

"Just in time," he cried. "I'm off by the 5·30, and shan't be able to wait a minute."

"Stuff!" said Lawyer Smart. "I go by the same train, and shall not leave for an hour at least."

"You'll be too late."

"I'm not often so, and don't expect to be to-day; but you're always half an hour too early. I don't blame you, because I know it's your point, and we've all got one, of some sort or other. But, for once, take your time if you can; and, at any rate, just settle your business with this gentleman."

"Oh! this is the gentleman about the Journal. Well, sir, I dare say Mr. Smart has told you what we want. A good editor, an expert reporter, a ready hand at the scissors and paste, with a general knowledge of printing, reviewing, reading for press, short-hand, &c."

"I think I may engage to do all this," replied Harold.

"You can report the assizes, lectures, and public meetings; forage for local news; work up accidents, describe fires; condense, digest, compile; select passages from books; collect facetiæ; write paragraphs, prospectuses, reviews, and leaders?"

"I will endeavour to meet every requirement."

"You are well up in the questions of the day, understand political economy and finance, have a right perception of the state of parties, are conversant with foreign affairs, church discipline, and railway management, and are thoroughly acquainted with the various bearings of the manufacturing, mining, mercantile, and shipping interests?"

"Of course, he is," said Lawyer Smart; "in addition to which he is versed in Hebrew, Greek, Chinese, Hindostanee, and Sanscrit, which are so constantly required on a country newspaper. Come, come, Twidger, no more nonsense. I tell you I've brought you a very clever fellow; and though he may not be the Crichton you seem to be fishing for, he'll prove such an editor as you've never had before."

"Then, as I'm in a hurry—as there's no time to be lost, I take him on your recommendation. The salary—"

"I've told him all about that," said Lawyer Smart, "and he accepts your terms."

"With great satisfaction," added Harold.

"Then, Mr. Arkworth—that's the name I think?—the thing's settled," observed Twidger, "and in three days I shall expect you at Mavering. Start by the 6.30 A.M., and you'll reach by 11·45. But, bless me! how the time flies. I must be off at once or I shall lose the train." And he made for the door.

"That's right," cried Smart. "Go off, and leave your bag behind you, and, I dare say, half your business in Paternoster Row forgotten."

"That just reminds me!" exclaimed the country bookseller, slapping his forehead. And he rushed out.

Harold bade adieu to the friendly lawyer; and now, with eager steps, hastened to announce his engagement to Brookman and Amy. It was growing dusk when he reached his lodging, and he found Brookman sitting alone.

"Is Amy out?" he asked.

"Yes," replied Brookman. "She thought it better to go to her work when she had installed me here; and I did not oppose her."

"It's near her time for coming home," returned Harold. "Shall we go and fetch her?"

"With all my heart."

They sallied forth together; and, as they went along Harold communicated his tidings. Brookman, so depressed before, seemed cheered by his success.

"It's a good opening for you, Harry," he said, after congratulating him; "and in a good place, too—in a manufacturing town, where men read and think. You'll do! I know you will!"

"You've always encouraged me, when no one else did; and I shall miss your hearty word, as well as your warm friendship. That is my only regret at leaving town."

"Then, don't fret at that, Harry; for we'll go with you. I've promised to visit the Manchester folk; and I can do it now, as well as any other time. I'll go down, and give them some lectures, and perhaps settle near you, after all."

Harold warmly commended this project. He was pleased with the idea of the lectures, knowing Brookman's talent for speaking, and believing that, with the *prestige* of his present popularity, he might make an honourable livelihood by such efforts, provided he could be kept clear of political subjects.

On arriving at the bonnet shop, they found, with mingled surprise and alarm, that Amy had been called for by a strange man, who said he came from her father; and they had left together in a cab. This incident was so mysterious, that it baffled conjecture, and, at first, neither Harold nor Brookman could arrive at any conclusion what course to take. The most diligent inquiry in the neighbourhood elicited no information as to the cab, or the route it had taken, and their only resource was to communicate with the police. Nothing, however, was gained by this step, beyond the announcement of the abduction at the different stations; and the two friends continued their inquiries with the same result. At length, weary and footsore, worn in body and mind, they returned home, relinquishing for a few hours a search which seemed hopeless, and which, indeed, they could pursue no further.

But this conviction did not satisfy Brookman; and with the morning's light he was again abroad, accompanied and assisted by Harold, and they traversed the town with

the same circumspection, visiting every locality, and inquiring in every direction. Everywhere they failed to obtain a trace of Amy; and gradually a singular delusion took possession of Brookman, and he persuaded himself that the Government, foiled in obtaining his condemnation, had, in revenge, spirited away his daughter.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE ABDUCTION.

DANVERS quitted the court of the Old Bailey with feelings very different from those which animated the party described in the last chapter. The acquittal of Brookman, the presence of Smart, and still more the mysterious absence of Hawker, for which he could no way account, harassed and bewildered him; and he found himself in the situation of a ship driving towards a lee shore, but whose pilot, still master of the helm, may alter, if not rule, her course. Once a suspicion that Hawker had betrayed him crossed his mind, and his eyes flashed with malignant fury; but in a moment he was reassured, strong, while he knew the rascality, in the habits and necessities of his confederate, who looked to him for support in idleness and debauchery, and could expect no such reward from the other side.

But it was necessary that they should have an immediate conference, and he bent his steps towards Chichester Rents, where, as before shown, Hawker resided. At the door he encountered a man in a velveteen shooting-coat, very spruce and neat, but having a curious bend about the

shoulders and a twist of the lower extremities, which Danvers, with a prompt perception of the cloven foot, recognised as the marks of a policeman. In fact, the interesting stranger was no other than Sergeant Lockyer, who had effected the arrest of Brookman, and was now, by direction of the authorities, on the look-out for Hawker, whose criminal defection the Government was determined to punish. Danvers instinctively divined the state of affairs, and of course the imprudence of making inquiry for the culprit, who, moreover, as he readily concluded, was, under such circumstances, not likely to be heard of at his lodgings. But it was necessary to account for his own appearance, and, with his usual adroitness, he asked the policeman if Mr. Smith resided there, and whether he was at home.

"Mr. Smith!" said the sergeant, with an oblique glance. "I can't say, 'pon my word, being only lookin' for somebody myself. It's a Mr. Hawker I want, about some money that's been left him."

"Indeed!" replied Danvers. "But I see I've come to the wrong place." And he retreated.

"Not the wrong place, but the wrong shop," thought Sergeant Lockyer. "There's something fly about that chap; and asking for Mr. Smith, too! Mr. Smith always sounds like queer street. Now I remember. I saw him about the Court this morning, and I shouldn't wonder if he's bought Hawker off, and come here after him. I'll just see where he goes to."

And, walking along with an unconcerned air, he followed in the steps of Danvers, like a Kaffir on a spoo . The baronet, relying on his superior appearance, never suspected the fact, till, in turning an angle, he encountered a boy in rags, who, with a thief's instinct, had observed the chace, and, supposing Danvers to be one of the swell mob,

gave him a friendly notice that "the beak was dodgin'." Danvers knew what was meant, but continued his way, without looking round, and suddenly quickening his pace, dived into a side street, hailed a Hansom that was passing, and, jumping in, drove home by a circuitous route.

Leaving his valet to discharge the cab, he entered the hall, and found Hawker awaiting him.

"You here!" he exclaimed between his teeth.

Hawker looked cowed, and silently followed him to the library.

"So you have the audacity to come to me, after cheating and cajoling me," said Danvers, resolved, now he could take advantage of his situation, to make him feel his resentment. "You've come for more money, I suppose? But we've done now. I'll have nothing more to say to you."

Hawker burned to retort, but checked himself.

"Hear what I've got to tell you, baronet," he said, fawningly, "and then if you blame me I'll say no more—that's all."

"You can tell me nothing that will acquit you of treachery, knavery, and perjury, or make me ever trust you again. But why need we talk? By helping to convict this fellow, you would have conferred a boon on society, and, at the same time, provided handsomely for yourself. You chose to let him off, and there the matter and our connection end."

"You're going on fast, baronet, rather!" said Hawker, his insolence reviving with a consciousness of power. "Our connection doesn't end, as long as you've got money, and I haven't. You stop the supplies, and I peach."

"Am I to understand you apply this language to me?" said Danvers, with an air of contempt.

"Perhaps I do. There are people besides Chartists

who have conspiracies, and I can witness against them as well as against Brookman."

"You're a pretty fellow, certainly, and I may comfort myself you have nothing to tell against me."

"It's nothing to plot against Brookman, and other things, which I don't want to mention unless you drive me to it."

"Mention what you like; who'll believe you—a fellow already branded as a perjurer? Do you know there's a warrant issued for your apprehension, and that the police are looking for you everywhere?"

"Let them take me!" said Hawker, though his countenance fell. "I'm not the only one they'll take when they know all. Suppose I'd gone into the box to-day, and given my evidence, who'd have been the sufferer? Brookman, you think? No; but myself and you! You didn't see Smart sidle up and give me a hint of something he had against me when I was his clerk, and which, if he'd mentioned it in Court, would have squashed my evidence, and brought up the whole story of the Seafords! That was why I got out of the way; and now I get kicked for it, instead of being rewarded."

"You swear this is true?" said Danvers, with a keen glance. "But, as for that, you'll swear anything."

"You may think so if you like, baronet," replied Hawker. "I'm too much of a gentleman to contradict you;" and he jeered at his own sarcasm. "But just ask yourself if it's likely I'd desert you, and give up the prize when it was almost in my hands, unless I was compelled to do it for my own safety."

"I can hardly think you'd be such a fool, only that rogues are always fools. But, at any rate, I'll try you once more, and give you an opportunity of redeeming your character."

"That's just what I want, baronet. Taste and try me before you buy me, that's all; and if I don't come up to the mark, discard me for ever!"

"That I assuredly will, though if you give me satisfaction, your reward shall leave you nothing to complain of; and indeed, the thing itself must be agreeable to you, since it will be an act of kindness and charity. I told you before, I wished to remove this man's child from the contagion of his example. I have now provided a home for her, and shall be glad to have her taken there. When can you do it?"

"To-night, if you like, baronet."

"The sooner the better. Decoy her into a cab—that will excite no suspicion, and then drive off to Hampstead Heath, where I'll meet you in the cutting of the Henley road, with a post-chaise, and give you further directions. Now, begone!" He flung him a purse, adding—"That will pay your expenses, and, if you prove successful, your fortune's made."

"Then you may consider the business settled, baronet," said Hawker. And he vanished from the room.

The fact of the police being on his track, while it depressed and unnerved him, kept him firm to his purpose, and he withstood the temptation to expend the money he had just received in his usual indulgences, which would have interfered with the execution of his project. As soon as it was dusk, he engaged a cab, and drove to the shop of Miss Sparkins. There, as he expected, he found Amy; and informing her that her father had met with an accident, and had been carried to the hospital, where he wished to see her immediately, the poor girl needed no persuasion to spring into the cab, when she was driven off.

Struck down by the supposed calamity, she was at first so bewildered, that she paid no attention to the direction

they were taking, and it was not till they had gone some distance, and came suddenly on a dark road, that she evinced alarm. Even then, thinking more of her father than herself, she was easily quieted by Hawker, who represented that the hospital was close at hand; and, indeed, in a few minutes they reached the spot appointed by Danvers, and the cab drew up.

A muffled figure came to the door; and before Amy could collect herself, a cloak was thrown over her head, and, spite of her struggles and half-suppressed cries, she was borne out of the cab, carried a few paces forward, and then thrown into a carriage, which whirled off with the swiftness of thought.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE OLD ABBEY.

When all hope of tracing Amy seemed to be gone, Harold's anxiety was increased, and his alarm doubled, by the disappearance of Brookman. It was the more embarrassing, as the time was now at hand, when, by his arrangement with Mr. Twidger, he must leave town, and proceed to Mavering; and, in the absence of his friend, he knew not what to do. But, after waiting till the last moment, he endeavoured to console himself with the reflection that Brookman knew the position of his affairs, as well as his future address at Mavering, and would no doubt communicate with him at that place, when he found that he had quitted London. Still, it was with

a heavy heart and reluctant step that he took his departure.

Reaching Mavering he was courteously received by Mr. Twidger, who, diffusing knowledge in all its branches, devoted himself, in his shop and library, both to the vending and the lending of books, as well as the publication of his journal, and was considered one of the notables of the town. He promptly installed Harold in his office, invited him to dinner, and recommended him to a lodging, where, having few wants, he was soon comfortably settled.

To one so industrious and energetic, who did not shrink from labour, or shy at difficulties, the position Harold filled was agreeable, though arduous; and even in the small sphere of a country town, he learnt, as Brookman had predicted, that the pen is the key to power. Those men of letters who have passed a portion of their hard apprenticeship on the chair of a country newspaper, amidst its multifarious requisitions and duties, will know it was no easy seat; but few will look back at that time without a lively feeling of pleasure. Harold found it a school for the highest faculties of his mind, the avenue to competence—it might be to eminence; and, meanwhile, he daily received, in his intercourse with the townspeople, gratifying proofs of the popular estimation of his profession.

Frequently his duties carried him to a considerable distance, even to the limits of the county; and it was in one of these excursions that, as shown in a former chapter, he encountered Phœbe Mayburn, and rendered her a timely service. The incident made a pleasing impression upon him, and, though he did not forget Eleanor, Phœbe's light spirit might have been gratified could she have divined how often he recurred to it.

In his leisure hours, a taste for archæology frequently led him to the ruins of an old abbey, about four miles from

the town. Here, amidst crumbling walls and moss-grown buttresses, his poet's imagination carried him back to mediæval ages, threw a dome over the roofless nave, and thronged the aisles with priests and monks. At the same time he searched beneath the rubbish for inscriptions and relics, or traced the ancient boundaries of the abbey with an antiquary's eagerness and relish.

While he was one day traversing the ruins, in a spot between two broken walls, a flag-stone, as he passed over it, reverberated his tread, and he paused to consider whether it might not mask some subterraneous cavity, the existence of which was forgotten. At this moment he heard a step drawing near, and presently was confronted by an elderly gentleman, who nimbly scrambled over a heap of *débris* into the passage.

"Good morning," said the new-comer, with a courteous smile, which seemed to invite fellowship. "You appear to have hit upon something that interests you."

"Yes," replied Harold; "I think there is a vault here."

"That can't be. The vaults are all on the other side. I know them well, for I've explored them often. Besides there's no aperture."

"It's covered by this stone. If that were raised we should find a cavity."

"Then it must be the entrance to the secret passage mentioned in the county history, and for which I've been searching for years. What a discovery! and at a most opportune moment, too; for our archæological society holds its annual meeting in a few weeks, and the abbey is to be the place of rendezvous."

"After all we may be mistaken, and there may be nothing here," said Harold. "A pickaxe and a crowbar would settle the question, by enabling us to raise the stone."

"That can soon be done. I'll just step over to my

house—it's only across the road—and get what is necessary."

He hastened away, and, after a short absence, returned with a labourer furnished with the requisite implements. All now set to work on the task of lifting the stone, which, bedded by time and pressure, was not easily moved, but at length their efforts were crowned with success, and they unmasked a hole of some depth, but it emitted such a rush of foul air that they were obliged to draw back, and for some minutes were unable to approach. Harold was the first to venture; and, looking down, found that the hole was walled round, and, at a depth of four or five feet, presented an aperture in the side, which was, no doubt, the long-lost secret passage.

"There it is," he said, eagerly. "I'll jump down and see where it leads to."

"No, no," replied his brother antiquary, detaining him. "If you went in there now, you'd never come out alive. Let it get ventilated a little, and we'll see what can be done to-morrow, if you like to come. As the discoverer, you ought to be here."

"I will attend with pleasure," replied Harold, "though I cannot claim the merit you award me, and at most can only share it with you."

"Well said, young gentleman," returned the other, with a gratified smile; "but we won't bandy compliments on that point. All we have to do is to keep our secret, so that it may come out with *éclât* at the society's meeting. If a whisper gets abroad, we shall see a full and particular account of it in the *Mavering Herald* next week. They've got a sharp blade there now—a young man from London, who snaps up everything, and I shouldn't wonder if he were to make his way here by some chance or other—a prying, inquisitive busybody!"

"I shouldn't at all wonder," said Harold.

"If he were, the whole thing would be blown directly," returned Mr. Windham—for so the gentleman was named. "He'd be down in the hole, through the passage, and out at the other end—if there is an end—before you could say 'presto.' Egad! if I caught him in the act, I could almost clap down the stone again, and shut the rascal in. He'll bring all the antiquaries in the county about us, and we should have a whole shower of papers on a theme which belongs exclusively to me."

"I dare say he'll find it out," said Harold, archly.

"Not if you keep silence."

"Oh! I won't say a word."

And with this promise he took his departure, highly amused to think how disconcerted the old gentleman would have been had he known that the obnoxious editor was already in the secret. He was on the spot early next day, leaving his work, as men of letters too often do, for the midnight lamp; and he was just meditating a descent into the hole, when Mr. Windham appeared. The antiquary, anticipating some rough work, was attended by his gardener, loaded with tools, and bearing a ladder, just long enough to reach the bottom of the hole. He shook hands with Harold, evidently pleased at his appearance.

"You haven't told any one?" he said.

"Not a soul," replied Harold.

"Then we'll beat the newspaper chap after all."

They descended into the hole, which was just large enough to admit two; and the gardener, standing at the top, steadied the ladder. The secret passage, as before remarked, opened from the side, midway down, and presented an aperture of about two feet square, apparently in a dilapidated condition. The danger of entering was so obvious, that Mr. Windham relinquished the design, but

Harold was not so easily daunted, and, to his companion's dismay, he scrambled in. The first step demonstrated the danger of the feat, the revetment giving way beneath the pressure.

"It won't do, you see," said Mr. Windham, "so let us give it up with a good grace, for it would be madness to proceed."

"At least I'll try," replied Harold.

And he crawled forward on his hands and knees, keeping down his head so as not to touch the stones above, which if they gave way would entomb him beneath. Here and there, indeed, some had fallen, and the way was impeded by rubbish, adding to the difficulty of progress. But he was more incommoded by the pent air, which grew fouler at every stride, and he suddenly became sensible that the passage narrowed as he advanced, and, at last, almost brushed his body. Respiration became painful, and it seemed equally perilous to go forward or recede. Having his back to the entrance, he was of course from the first unable to see, but the darkness now became painful, and combined with the putrid air to blind and stifle him. He could hear Mr. Windham shouting from behind, and indeed his disappearance from view occasioned the antiquary the greatest alarm. He deeply regretted that he had not—if necessary, by force—prevented the young man from entering the passage, and wondered how he could have countenanced an enterprise so hazardous. His apprehensions of a fatal result increased every moment, yet how was he to render assistance, or what could he do? Once he thought of crawling into the passage himself, but reflection convinced him that such a step could produce no advantage, but would only involve him in Harold's danger, and he awaited, in doubt and anxiety, but not without a glimmer of hope, the issue of the adventure. Thus nearly an hour

elapsed, and his alarm had reached the highest pitch, when to his amazement Harold presented himself above, apparently safe and sound, but so besmeared with decayed lime and *débris*, that he could scarcely be recognised.

"Why how in the name of wonder did you get there?" cried Mr. Windham.

"Not without difficulty, I assure you," replied Harold, merrily. "But you forget what you said I was to do—to be down in the hole, through the passage, and out at the other end, before you could say 'presto.'"

"Ay?" said Mr. Windham, bewilderingly rubbing his forehead.

"I was obliged to be quick," pursued Harold; "for you know if you'd caught me in the act, you intended to clap down the stone, and shut me in."

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed the antiquary. "Then you're the editor of the *Mavering Herald*, are you?"

"I can't deny the charge."

"Sold, by George!" said the antiquary, clambering out of the hole. "However, I'm glad to make your acquaintance, Mr. Editor."

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE CHASE.

THOUGH Eleanor was for an instant embarrassed by the sudden appearance of Mr. Mayburn and Phœbe, just as she was emerging from the churchyard with Ashleigh, she did not lose her self-possession, but explaining how she and the Squire had met, divested the incident of that colouring which it seemed to bear, and which Phœbe, too apt to judge others by herself, was, at first, well inclined to give it.

"I need not take Mr. Ashleigh any further now," she concluded, "as I can run home in a minute, and be safe in doors before you are out of hearing."

"That will be very unkind treatment of Mr. Ashleigh," observed Phœbe, "and I'm sure he'll protest against it. At least I should, were I in his place!"

"I could not wish to thrust myself on Miss Staveley," said the Squire, somewhat coldly, "though I shall be only too happy to escort her, if she will permit me."

"We'll all go with her," said Mr. Mayburn, "and that will obviate every objection. Come, Miss Staveley, I intend to take charge of you myself."

"You'll have to put up with me, then," said Phœbe, as Ashleigh, with whom she was left behind, offered her his arm.

"Welcome necessity!" exclaimed Ashleigh.

"Oh! you intend to make a virtue of it? You should be sure, first, it is a necessity; and to prove it's none, I shall just walk on by myself."

"How you misinterpret me!" exclaimed Ashleigh. "Almost I could cry with the poet—'coy, uncertain, hard to please.'"

Here they were interrupted by Eleanor, who turned to take leave, while Mr. Mayburn, determined to see her safe in, knocked at the cottage door. At the last moment, Eleanor and Phœbe had, of course, a thousand things to say, and there is no knowing how long they would have stood, if the worthy millowner had not interfered, and drawn Phœbe away. The door was open; the host stood, light in hand, in the passage; and, with one more good night, Eleanor glided in.

She was unprepared for the raillery which met her next morning, when Phœbe, at her music lesson, had her all to herself, and quickly recurred to her rencontre with Ashleigh.

"I can't think it was altogether an accident on the Squire's part," she said, banteringly, "and I believe, if the truth were known, he was lurking about your lodgings, on tender thoughts intent. Else what business had he at that particular spot, just as somebody had occasion for his services?"

"I might say, and with more reason, because he expected somebody to be coming that way, in company with her papa," replied Eleanor. "You must know it is yourself, and you alone, whom Mr. Ashleigh admires."

"That's very good, to throw him over to me."

"He is your property, and I have nothing to say to him."

"He will have something to say to you, I'm sure. If he has ever had a passing fancy for me, it's gone, or on the wane, and he can't say I have encouraged him; but if you are cruel, I pity his poor heart."

"Pity it now, while it is yours, and wholly yours,"

said Eleanor. And her soft voice grew softer as she added—"Ah! you don't know what you throw away. I am as young in the world as yourself, but I have learnt already that such men as Mr. Ashleigh are not common, and should be appraised at their right value. He has an honest, kindly, and generous heart, a brave spirit, and a mind cast in no ordinary mould. In a worldly point of view, he possesses everything that could be desired; social position, wealth, influence, and character. He is handsome, gallant, witty, and gay. What more can even Phœbe Mayburn look for?"

"It is not Phœbe Mayburn, but Eleanor Staveley, I tell you."

"I see you are determined to be wilful," said Eleanor, shaking her head, "so I shall say no more."

"That's a good, kind governess, and you shall see I can be grateful for your forbearance; for I intend to make you promise to come and see us start for the hunt to-morrow, and to lend you my pony for the purpose. You ride, I know."

"Yes; but I'm sorry I shall not be able to accept your kind offer, as I've no habit."

"But I can lend you one; so that shall be no obstacle. Now I won't let you go till you accept."

Eleanor, who had a real *penchant* for equestrian exercise, though not to the degree practised by Phœbe, readily consented, and felt very sensibly the kind thoughtfulness which had prompted the attention. She had, indeed, become much attached to Phœbe, despite of her waywardness and lightness, and Phœbe understood and reciprocated her feelings. They parted, at last, excellent friends, both looking forward to the great event of the morrow.

At the hour appointed for the meet, all the country was astir. Vehicles of every description, from the open

carriage to the tradesman's cart—every kind of horse, from the well-trained hunter to the butcher's hack—equestrians and pedestrians of both sexes, and all ranks,—thronged to the rendezvous, eager to witness the start, or to take part in the chase. Among the equestrians were Phœbe and Eleanor, the former mounted on her hunter, the latter on a handsome pony, which, by its prancing and curveting, seemed equal to the wildest feats. There, too, was Ashleigh, in hunting costume, and well becoming his scarlet coat, which vied with the bright shell jacket of Captain Raffles, who, with military tact, and determined not to be cut out, kept close at Phœbe's side, ready to render any service that might be required. For some minutes all chatted together, with that vivacity and animation which the scene and the moment were calculated to inspire; bows were interchanged with distant acquaintances, smiles and greetings with those at hand, and all awaited, eagerly but joyously, the signal to proceed. At length the stag was driven forth; the yelping hounds were uncoupled; the horn rang out its cheery music; and, amidst a chorus of jocund shouts, the chase began.

All set forward, horse, foot, and vehicle, to the first hedge, which rose up like a barrier to intercept the flood of spectators, and keep a clear course. It was an inspiriting and exciting spectacle; and none could look on—none could see the whole throng in motion, laughing, cheering, and shouting, without a wish to follow. At first, the stag seemed more astonished than frightened, and tossed his head and shook his antlers in proud disdain. But, as his ear caught the ringing notes of the horn and the yelp of the hounds, he quickened his steps, struck boldly across the field, and led the chase in gallant style. A friendly gap for which he shaped his course, afforded him a ready outlet, and many a timid huntsman availed himself of the same opening, instead of bravely leaping

the hedge. Captain Raffles was loud in his denunciation of these defaulters, though Phœbe, who had missed him at the critical moment, and looked round, observed that he had himself rather shirked, taking the leap at a very favourable spot. But she cunningly preserved silence, resolved to test the Captain's horsemanship further on, should a good opportunity present itself. Meanwhile he kept up with herself, amongst the foremost riders, and all proceeded over the rugged ground at a break-neck pace, the stag not far ahead, and closely trailed by the hounds. But a few moments altered their position. The stag, warmed by pursuit, was now thoroughly aroused; he flew on like the wind; and hound, steed, and huntsman, their spirit kindled, and their blood up, were in full cry behind. Soon they made a wide field; stragglers, at first but few, became more numerous; the stag was out of sight; the cry of the hounds came back from a distance; the horn rang clear over wood and mead; and, far as the eye could reach, a gallant few steadily maintained the chase. Over hedge, and ditch, and gate, over ploughed field, and running stream, helter-skelter, as they could, the little party spurred along, never drawing rein, and never relaxing speed. Phœbe, boldest of the band, began to form a better opinion of the Captain, who was still at her side, and certainly made some bold leaps; but, in an evil moment, he took advantage of a gap, and all her scepticism returned. Determined to punish him, and familiar with the suitable spots, she brought him up before a formidable five-bar gate, just in front of a heap of fresh earth, where he might fall gently, and, with a cry of tally-ho, she vaulted over, looking round to see that he followed. The Captain, perceiving there was no escape, dashed on; his horse cleared the gate; but, feeling his rider unsteady, kicked up behind, tossing the Captain, like a feather, on the bank, and then patiently waiting till he recovered himself.

No sooner had the accident occurred, than Phœbe felt alarmed for the consequences.

"I hope you are not hurt?" she said, alighting.

"Nothing to speak of," replied the Captain, with a groan. "Only broken every bone in my body."

"And you call that nothing!"

"Well, I shall get over it, I dare say: so don't let me keep you."

"Oh! never mind me! I've stopped to pick you up."

"The deuce you have:—I mean it's very kind of you." And he scrambled to his feet. "By George, I never had such a shaking in my life."

"You'd better rest yourself a little. There's a friend's close by, where we can go in, and, if you like, you can have a carriage to take you home. I'll hold your horse while you mount, and we'll walk him down the lane to the house."

"If ever I mount that brute again, I hope he'll not only throw me, but eat me," cried the Captain.

"How shall we manage, then? Will you wait here while I ride off for assistance?"

"Not for worlds would I give you so much trouble; and, in fact, it is unnecessary, as I can walk up to the house very well."

"What, with broken legs?"

"Ah! it's not my legs," said the Captain, plaintively; "it's my heart."

"Then you'll do very well; for there are no bones to break there, and it will stand a good deal of shaking. Come along; I'll lead the horses, and we have only to go up this lane, where a gate will bring us out by the ha-ha, and we can cross to the house."

We must now revert to Eleanor, who, like the Captain, was fated to meet a misadventure. She had not turned

back, with the majority of the spectators, at the first hedge; but, guiding her pony through the gap, proceeded some distance over the ploughed ground, in keen enjoyment of the chase. But this rough riding, however alluring from the novelty, soon became disagreeable, and, feeling its effect, she made for an open gate, and gained the road. There was still a chance that she might rejoin the hunt higher up, and, at any rate, she might secure the pleasure of a good ride. With this reflection she cantered along, not sorry, after the severe shaking she had endured, to find herself once more on the smooth road, with no obstacle in the way. The fresh, bracing air, the open country, the bright and smiling sky, all cheered and inspired her; and the gladness of her heart, so innocent and pure, glowed in her cheek, and sparkled in her eye. A ride of three miles brought her to a cross-road, close to the lodge of a noble park; and as she was meditating which road to follow, she saw the chase coming down in full swoop, the stag, though his pace was rapid, not far in advance. She pushed on, hoping to meet it, when her pony, which had suddenly become rather restiff, seemed to fall lame, obliging her to pull up. Alighting to ascertain the cause, she found he had cast a shoe, probably on the heavy, clumpy ground of the field, to which, like herself, he was unaccustomed; and, as she was considering how to act, the whole train flew by. She was, however, discerned by Ashleigh, who was one of the party, and, perceiving that something had happened, he rode up to tender his assistance.

To the Squire's eye, Eleanor had never looked so charming, wearing a costume he always admired, and which was particularly becoming to her style of beauty, while her soft, clear cheeks were mantled with bloom, heightened, perhaps, by some little trace of confusion as he approached. A word explained her situation and her difficulty.

"If that is all, the mischief can soon be remedied," replied Ashleigh. He examined the pony's hoof, and added—"Yes, he's lost a shoe, but there's no other damage." And tapping at the window of the lodge, he brought out the porter, to whom he consigned the pony, giving him instructions what to do.

"Will you not walk in, while your pony goes round to the smithy?" he then said to Eleanor. "The prospect from the avenue here is thought very fine, and will give you a glimpse of the chase."

"Shall we not be intruding?" asked Eleanor.

"By no means," replied Ashleigh, with a half smile. "I am on such terms with the master of the house, that any of my friends will be welcome."

He stepped forward, and Eleanor, assured by his words, did not hesitate to accompany him. The gateway opened on an avenue of ancient elms, flanked on one side by a dense shrubbery, which, however, terminated at a sudden sweep of the road, when they came in sight of the house—a venerable edifice of brick, faced with stone, and bearing unmistakable marks of the Tudor era. Around lay the park, now spread before them like a picture, and forming a scene which indeed warranted Ashleigh's encomium.

"This is very pretty," said Eleanor; "wood and water, hill and dale, all the features of a landscape. And there go the stag and hounds and huntsmen! How picturesque it all looks! The fine old house, too, with its quaint porch, and ancestral associations!—your friend must be proud of it."

"He ought to be," replied Ashleigh, apparently pleased with her admiration; "and I believe he is; for it was here he first drew breath, and here he will probably die."

"That is a fine feeling for an English gentleman, if he entertain it—to live and die on his estate, in the midst of his tenantry! What position can be more enviable, and what sphere more honourable or useful? To his tenants he may be a friend while they own him as a chief, to his dependents a father and benefactor, and, at the same time, the law arms him, as a magistrate, with powers to right the oppressed, and protect the defenceless. I have often thought, when I've seen these mansions rising up in different parts of the country, what a blessing it would be if the poor were taught to regard their owners in this light: then they would be as beacons, to which they might look for light in ignorance and help in need; and our country gentlemen might be so many kings."

"I don't know that we could look for such a result as that," replied Ashleigh; "but our duties are clear, and you have described them well."

"Ah! I forgot it was a country gentleman I was talking to," said Eleanor. "What will you think of me for lecturing on such a subject!" And her heightened colour showed she was really embarrassed.

"You lecture so well, I should like to hear more," replied Ashleigh.

"No, no!" returned Eleanor, naïvely. "And, by the way, you have not yet told me your friend's name."

"I can't exactly say now he is my friend, or any one else's. Judging him by your standard, he's a very worthless fellow, and I'm ashamed of him."

"Now you're jesting, I'm sure."

"I assure you, I'm not. The owner of this house is simply what I say, an idle, thoughtless, careless—"

"Stop, stop, or I shall think you're either slandering your neighbour or quizzing me. I only want to know his name."

"Oh! his name's well enough, and I only wish he did it more credit. It's RALPH ASHLEIGH."

"Yourself!" murmured Eleanor, looking confused.

Ashleigh would have enjoyed her surprise, but there was a shade in her face, indicating that it was mingled with pain.

"I see they are bringing round my pony," she said, just as he was about to speak; "and I can now ride home. Let me thank you again for your kind attention."

"If you will permit me, I'll go as far as Mr. Mayburn's with you," replied Ashleigh, who was rather disappointed that he could not show her the house, but felt that, as she was alone, there might be an impropriety in inviting her in.

At this juncture, they were interrupted by a peal of laughter, whose musical, bell-like tones they well knew, and, turning, they beheld Phœbe and the Captain.

"Caught again!" exclaimed Phœbe. "I declare, we're always running against each other, when we least expect it."

"Yes," observed the Captain, apart: "while we were following the stag, the Squire was chasing the *dear*."

Eleanor, seeing at once the construction her situation would suggest, was at a loss what to say, but her distress was observed by Ashleigh, who promptly came to her relief, explaining how they had met.

"Of course, it was the most natural thing in the world," said Phœbe, banteringly. "The palfrey cast its shoe, but the Squire he was true, and did all that he could do."

But, glancing at Eleanor, she saw the tears in her eyes, and her little malice was disarmed.

"After all, he's a very trusty squire," she said, "and I know none whose services we poor damsels might so soon

accept. But I've had my adventure, as well as you, and have picked up the Captain."

"What, has he been down?" cried Ashleigh, glad to create a diversion for Eleanor. "Why, Captain, how's this? You're covered with mud."

"And my bones are as sore as if it were glory," replied the Captain. "You must lend me a dog-cart, or an easy chair, or something of that sort, to go home in, for I positively can't walk a step further."

And he made such a rueful face, that neither Phœbe nor Ashleigh could resist its effect, laughing long and loud.

"Well, here are our horses, and Eleanor and I will ride on, and leave you two to your own devices," said Phœbe at length. "Are you ready, Eleanor?"

"Quite."

Ashleigh would gladly have detained them; but Eleanor, though she had recovered her composure, was evidently impatient to be gone; and, leaving the Captain on the lawn, he attended them to the gate. There they parted, and the two ladies rode off at a canter towards home.

"Now I must congratulate you on your conquest," said Phœbe; "one at sight; and you may now say with Cæsar— you came, saw, and conquered."

"Can you be so severe?" said Eleanor, deprecatingly.

"Severe, you child! Why I'm complimentary, laudatory; and, what is more, I'm delighted. It's the very thing I could have wished for you, and all you could wish for yourself. What would you have?"

"I would have my dear pupil think of me generously and justly, and not regard me in the light of a manœuvrer, as I fear she now does."

"Then you're neither generous to me, nor just; for I

have no such thought. So now, your hand upon it, dear Eleanor; and think of me always as one who would serve, but never wrong you."

"Thank you, thank you," said Eleanor, with emotion.

And they said no more till they reached Mr. Mayburn's gate.

CHAPTER XXV.

MEETING BY MOONLIGHT.

As the day approached for the archæological meeting, preparations began to be made at Mavering on an extensive scale, all being determined, for the credit and glory of the town, to eclipse the reputation of Gainsford, where the gathering had been held the previous year.

Mr. Windham was not the least eager in the cause; and both as an antiquary, and the nearest resident to the abbey, which was to be one of the spots of exploration, felt his honour concerned in the result. Several of the visitors were invited to stay at his house, and he resolved, with the full concurrence of his connubial partner—a power of considerable weight—to inaugurate the meeting by a *soirée*, to which all who were interested in the proceedings should be bidden. Meanwhile, he completed his paper on the secret passage, and felt a satisfaction in submitting it to Harold, who, after going carefully over it, pronounced it exceedingly well done, and was really candid in this opinion.

Harold's engaging qualities and kindred tastes rendered him a favourite with the antiquary, and no less so with

Mrs. Windham, who, notwithstanding some little faults of temper and habits, was fond of her husband, and glad to see him amused. Thus the young man was always welcome at Windham Grange.

"I'm so glad you have called," said Mrs. Windham one morning, about a week before the great event, "as I was just going to write to you, to request you would dine with us this evening."

"I shall be only too happy," replied Harold.

"Then come early, for I want to introduce you to a young lady—the greatest beauty, to my taste, in the whole county. And she'll be rich, too—quite an heiress. But, there! I say nothing, only I know a person who would stand a very good chance. But then, I never meddle in other people's business, because I think it's wrong, decidedly—don't you?"

"It depends upon circumstances," replied the artful Harold, who knew the lady's weak point.

"Well, there I'm quite with you; for I grant there may be cases when one should not be too particular, though I never either meddle or make myself. Still, to serve a friend, there's no saying what one might do. But you'll come."

And Mrs. Windham significantly pressed his hand as they parted, though what this gesture meant, Harold, in his simplicity, did not exactly know, but had an undefinable notion that it bore reference to the coming young lady. Had he known more, his interest would have been heightened; for the expected visitor was no other than Phœbe Mayburn.

Phœbe, though she took no delight in archæology, liked to be present at the local gatherings, and had readily accepted an invitation to pass a fortnight with the Windhams, as the distance from Gainsford—the two places being

about a dozen miles apart—might otherwise have prevented her attending. When fairly installed at the Grange, she was, like Harold, duly prepared for an interview.

"There's a friend of Mr. Windham's coming this evening, whom I must introduce to you," said her hostess; "a young man who has lately arrived here, editor of the *Mavering Herald;* and I'm sure you'll like him, for we all do. He's so clever, too; and at his age, to be editor of a newspaper, is, Mr. Windham says, quite surprising. It's a pleasure to meet with such people—don't you think so?"

"If they are agreeable, it must be," replied Phœbe.

"No one can be more agreeable than this young man; and besides there's a mark about him, a sort of something you can't describe, that strikes you at once. But I'll introduce him, and then you'll judge for yourself. I know who'll captivate him, just with one glance of her eye. Ah! you may smile. But it's no business of mine, and, of course, I shan't interfere."

Still, by-and-by, she resumed, more than once, the fruitful theme, and was so lavish in Harold's praises, that Phœbe, with all her large heart, which had passed unscathed through so many flirtations, began to feel a little curiosity about this paragon, and to look for his appearance with interest. What was her surprise, when, on the arrival of the company, Mrs. Windham presented Harold, and she recognised the young man who, on the morning of her eventful ride, had rendered her such a timely service!

"Why, is it possible you have met before?" said Mrs. Windham, as they cordially shook hands.

"We have, indeed," said Phœbe, "though only for a moment." And she narrated the incident.

"And now you've come together again!" exclaimed Mrs. Windham. "I declare it's quite romantic, and equal to any novel."

Perhaps Phœbe thought it was strange; but it was easy to see she was pleased. She did not, as her custom was, throw her eyes round the room, to lure by their sorcery every wight within reach; but, on the other hand, they were often turned on Harold, and then with no volatile, though a sparkling glance. This was the more surprising, as Harold, like most men of the study, was rather deficient in that small talk which is said to have a special fascination for the female ear, and which, to say truth, Phœbe both liked and encouraged. But she now showed that if she could amuse herself with the froth that floated on the surface, she could also dive beneath the still water for the pearls in its depths, and come up freshened by the plunge, with the spoil in her hand. So it was that she fathomed and understood the breadth of Harold's mind, and learnt that an instrument which could boast no tinkling brass, but was in appearance even somewhat homely, might, when delicately touched, discourse most eloquent music.

They sat together at dinner; and when the gentlemen appeared in the drawing-room, Phœbe, by one of those adroit glances of which she well knew the use and effect, again drew Harold to her side.

"Mrs. Windham has been telling us of your discovery of the secret passage," she said; "and, do you know, it has so interested me, I think I shall become an antiquary myself. It adds quite a charm to the old abbey, which now wants nothing but a ghost to render it famous."

"You are not aware, then, it already possesses that attraction," replied Harold, with a smile.

"You are jesting!"

"I assure you, I'm as serious as I ought to be on such a grave subject. But I am not surprised that you are ignorant of the legend, as it seems to be wholly forgotten in the neighbourhood, and I only met with it

myself accidentally, in looking over an old history of the locality."

"And there really is a ghost, then! To think I have known the place from childhood, have roamed about the ruins for days together, and played hide and seek in the vaults; and yet never met with it."

"That might easily happen; for, according to the legend, the phantom only appears once a year—at midnight on the eve of St. Agnes, who, as you no doubt know, was the patron saint of the sisterhood attached to the abbey."

"And what is the phantom, and what does it appear for? I must beg you to tell me the whole legend; for ghost stories are now so rare, it would be a pity to lose one, particularly at night, when one most enjoys being frightened."

"This is not very horrid, considering its antiquity. As the story goes, a nun who broke her vows, was once bricked up alive in the vaults, and, at the time stated, she comes out of her tomb, and makes the circuit of the chapel. It is said that any damsel or swain who goes there alone at that hour, may interrogate her as to their future, and she will indicate by a sign whether their love will be fortunate or the reverse."

"What an interesting legend! I declare I could almost find in my heart to go to the ruin on St. Agnes' eve, just to ascertain if there is any truth in it? But then if there should be!"

"Ay, there's the rub," said Harold, laughing.

At this moment, Mrs. Windham, impatient to interfere, most provokingly presented herself, and several strangers coming round, Harold thought it judicious to move away. Accordingly he joined Mr. Windham, and had no opportunity of speaking to Phœbe again during the evening.

The next day Phœbe walked into Mavering, which was only about a mile distant, to order some books from the library, and, on returning, encountered Harold. The young man, glad of such a companion, accompanied her into the fields, and they sauntered leisurely along, without heeding their steps, till, looking round, Phœbe discovered they had gone much further than was necessary, leaving Windham Grange about a mile in their rear. Still Phœbe lingered, leaning against the stile that separated them from the road; and they talked of a thousand things without connection and without aim. Phœbe, as time flew by, knew not what gave such zest to their conversation, and made her unconscious of the fleeting moments; but, perhaps, it was not the words spoken, but the genial fellowship of a kindred spirit. After a time, Harold walked back with her to the Grange, and, at the gate, they met Mrs. Windham, who, wishing to encourage such friendly relations, insisted on Harold remaining with them for the rest of the day. She was going to Mavering herself, and Mr. Windham was out; but they might, if they liked, go in search of him, and they would probably find him at the abbey, pursuing his antiquarian explorations. Phœbe, however, was fatigued, and they went in to rest themselves, leaving Mrs. Windham to continue her walk to Mavering. Thus they were nearly all day alone; and those few hours, with the wings of seconds, gave the confidence and intimacy of years.

Was it by chance that Phœbe, so adroit as she was, happened to be at the Mavering library next morning just about the same hour, when, with her experience of the previous day, she might expect to find Harold there also? However that may be, there they met; and, taking the same path, walked again into the fields, talked again on the same subjects, and, after once more lingering at the

stile, returned together to the Grange. But on this occasion Harold would not go in, and they parted at the gate, as friendly as before.

Though so enjoying a flirtation, Phœbe did not like to make a third errand to the library, but the next morning loitered in the path across the fields, thinking she would not be long without a companion. But Harold did not come. The truth was, that his office of reporter had suddenly called him to Manchester, and he had gone off at a moment's notice on a mission which would occupy several days. The young girl, so accustomed to be followed, flattered, and courted, and who had never before expected in vain, was disappointed at his non-appearance. It was one of those little troubles of the heart which, small as they seem, and exciting only a smile in after life, still at the time give pain, pressing on feelings tender, sensitive, and quick. It was a new lesson for Phœbe to learn; but her light spirit soon revived: her thoughts threw off their gloom; and she was happy in her heedlessness, her fickleness, and her youth.

She did not take the path into the fields next day; nor, though she found it more difficult to refrain, on the following; but if Harold was unseen, he was not unthought of, and, on the other hand, Phœbe was too conscious of her charms, and, if the truth must be told, of her arts, to suppose she could be altogether forgotten. True, she felt impatient, and perhaps a little resentful; but this did not affect her spirits, and her natural gaiety remained unchecked.

The night of the *soirée*, which many besides Phœbe awaited, at length arrived, but the saloon was filled with company before Harold made his appearance. Phœbe was so piqued, that she resolved, as she saw him approach, to pretend ignorance of his presence, but her little bursts of

temper were only momentary, and the resolution was abandoned almost as it was formed.

"Have you been long here?" she asked.

"No," replied Harold, "I have but just come; but I have a good excuse, having had to ride all the way from Manchester."

"That is a distance, and does excuse you," said Phœbe, more cordially. "Have you been there and back to-day?"

"Oh, no! I went at the beginning of the week, and thought to have returned last night; but I had so much to do, that it was with difficulty I got away this evening."

His absence, which had seemed so unaccountable, was now explained, and Phœbe's little malice was dispelled. They chatted together for some time, when they were broken in upon, as usual, by their friendly hostess; but, at this instant, it was announced that Mr. Windham, at the request of some fair antiquaries, was about to read his paper on the recently-discovered secret passage, and there was a general call for silence. This was readily accorded, and the paper was read amidst profound attention, and with great *éclât*. It related, in an amusing manner, the incident of the discovery, awarding high praise to Harold, particularly for his intrepid exploration of the passage, and then paid a compliment to his literary talents, which, though now confined to a provincial newspaper, gave promise of a reputation in a wider sphere. Many kindly glances were turned on the young man at these words, which he received with modesty, to himself almost painful; but he was presently relieved by the introduction of the ghost story, which Mr. Windham adduced as a new embellishment of the abbey. He concluded by remarking the strange coincidence, that this legend, which had slept so many years, was now again dragged to light on the very anni-

versary and almost at the very moment when the phantom was said to appear, this being, in fact, the eve of St. Agnes, and the hour fast approaching midnight—an announcement which imparted an electric shock to his hearers, and immediately invoked a Babel of tongues, full of eloquence on the engrossing theme.

"Is it not a charming little legend, Mr. Somerville?" said Phœbe, as the curate, who was a zealous antiquary, and had walked all the way from Gainsford to be present at the *soirée*, came up to her. "You're just the person to tell us if it is true."

"That is beyond me," replied Mr. Somerville, with a serious air, "and perhaps of all of us."

"Mr. Arkworth smiles, as if he were a sceptic," observed Phœbe.

"I am naturally incredulous," said Harold; "and, with all deference for you—if you are a believer—I see nothing in this case to convert me."

"Yet you must remember the opinion of Johnson—that we know so little of the world of spirits, we cannot say that such things are impossible," observed Mr. Somerville.

"Then, we should remember the occasion on which he pronounced," said Harold, "and we shall find little to convince us in the story of the Cock Lane Ghost."

"Nothing to convince, but something to mystify," said Mr. Somerville; "for that incident has never been completely cleared up. But an imposture, supposing it to be proved, does not affect the main question, and, perhaps, we may still doubt, where we are still ignorant."

"It is decidedly safer," remarked Phœbe; "and, for my part, I should hardly like to think there were no ghosts, though it would be very disagreeable to meet with one. If you are an unbeliever, Mr. Arkworth, how do

you account for the spiritual manifestations of our own day, of which every one is talking?"

"You may think me presumptuous, but, since you have asked my opinion, I must confess I consider them either tricks or delusions."

"I question if Mr. Somerville will endorse that view," returned Phœbe.

"I am not prepared to express any," said the curate, modestly, "having never witnessed the so-called manifestations myself, so that I can judge only from hearsay. But, in truth, we know not what guise the powers of evil may assume, in order to work out their ends."

"At all events, we may conclude it will not be one that excites ridicule," rejoined Harold, "nor for a purpose inadequate to the means. When nature deviates from her appointed laws, it is for a mighty result—for the erection of a continent or the destruction of a world; and should the grave yield up its dead, or invisible spirits hold intercourse with man, it will be for no idle object, and will rather be notified by a peal of thunder than a tap on the floor."

"Still, I say we know not," returned the curate. "To measure these things by our comprehension, or our ideas, is to attempt the labour of the boy, whom St. Augustine found on the shore, endeavouring to pour the sea into a little hole."

"Well, here is an admirable opportunity of settling the point, as far as regards the abbey," said Phœbe. "Mr. Arkworth, since he is incredulous, can have no objection to go to the ruin, and see if the nun will appear."

"Not the least," said Harold, merrily. And, looking at his watch, he added—"But if I am to go, I have no time to lose. Have you any commands for the apparition?"

"Not on my part," said Phœbe; "but, of course, to fully test the story, you must ask the customary question."

"Oh, of course!" replied Harold.

Mr. Somerville said nothing, but looked grave, as if he did not quite approve of the proceeding.

Harold, seizing a favourable moment, made his egress unobserved. The night was dark and lowering, in keeping with the errand on which he was bound, and, every now and then, the wind, after falling almost to a breath, burst forth in gusts, which might, indeed, suggest the voices of troubled spirits. Notwithstanding his affected incredulity, Harold was too strongly imbued with the poetic temperament to ignore the possibility of an unseen world; and though, as he had intimated, he associated its revelations with great ends, not with the mean purposes of every-day life, an imagination so fervid could easily persuade itself that spirits might continue to haunt the spots where they had suffered on earth, even for no special object, and, at such times, assume a visible shape. But the very sentiment which prompted this impression gave it a sort of fascination, rendering it attractive, rather than repelling. Did we but reflect, indeed, such encounters, if they entered into common life, need excite no terror in virtuous minds, seeing that such as we believe these apparitions to be, we ourselves must become, and that between us and this transformation, great gulf as it seems, only a few years intervene.

There was a short way to the abbey, through Mr. Windham's garden; but, finding the gate locked, Harold took the longer route by the road, satisfied that he had time to reach the ruin before twelve. To make sure, however, he quickened his pace: soon the hoary fabric loomed gloomily into view, a dark, shapeless mass; an intervening field was crossed; and he stood within its precincts.

As he passed through the fallen cloister to the nave—as he looked around, and saw the walls black with age and night, here standing erect, here crumbling and broken, he forgot the immediate purpose of his visit, and suffered his thoughts to be swept back into the past, when religion itself was a ruin such as this. But then, as now, the bright stars had shone above, like beacons of faith, eternal witnesses to God's goodness and mercy; and the vaulted sky had spanned all with its dome, making the whole earth one mighty temple. Instinctively he turned his eyes upward: the sky, which had been hung with darkness, had just thrown off a mass of cloud, laying bare its jewelled breast, as a coquet might raise her veil; and, far away, the moon burst forth, pouring a stream of silver radiance through broken arch and fractured window, lighting up the gloomy nave, and leaving the aisles in deep shadow. It was the poet's picture of Melrose, heightened and sublimed—heightened by time, and sublimed by ruin. Then, from the distance, came the clear sound of the market-clock at Mavering, striking forth the hour of midnight.

Harold could hardly believe his eyes. In the open porch stood a figure, enveloped in the white dress of a penitent, which, catching the moonlight, had an effect weird and unearthly, at once suggesting a phantom. Could he be dreaming? could imagination be so vivid and so deluded? As he pondered, the figure moved, entered the nave with step noiseless and slow, and approached. If Harold's heart beat quick, it was not from fear, but from surprise, wonder, excitement. In a moment the apparition was at his side, and silently passed round him, almost touching him with its garments. Its face closely cowled, its form swathed in flowing drapery, it stalked on, now in the shadow of the wall, now in the mystic light, till, making the circuit of the nave, it stood again before

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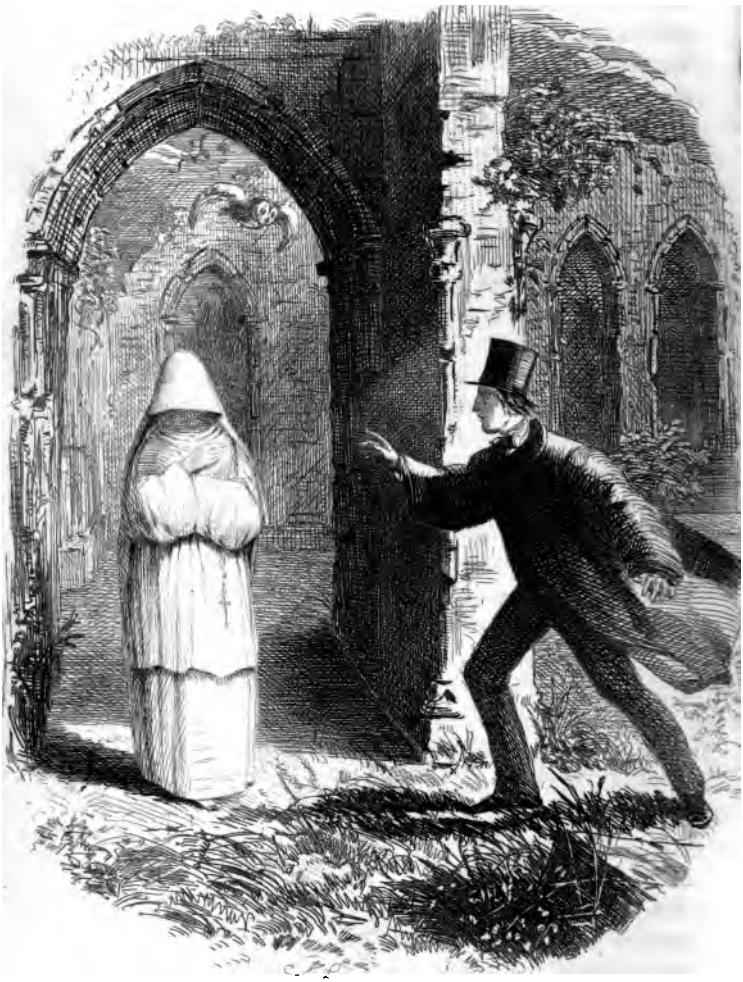

Harold—stood, as if it looked at him. The young man was collected and resolved. He stepped forward, bent on unravelling the mystery; and the apparition, without turning round, receded. Suddenly he made a spring, and endeavoured to seize it; but the phantom eluded his grasp. Was it really unsubstantial and ideal, existing to the eye, but not to the touch? He made another attempt, and now was more successful. He felt a tangible substance; he grasped the loose drapery; but its wearer slipped aside, leaving the robe in his hand. Then a loud laugh pealed through the ruin; and Harold, befriended by the moonlight, caught a glimpse of the fair face of Phœbe Mayburn, as she vanished, like a real phantom, behind an adjacent buttress. He darted after her, but in vain: she was already half way over the field, and before he reached the road, she was out of sight, having taken the shorter route home, through Mr. Windham's garden, by which she had been enabled to reach the abbey almost as soon as himself, and without being observed.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE BALL.

Mr. Windham's *soirée* gave such satisfaction, and the archæological meeting at the abbey, which came off the next day, was so successful, that the good people of Mavering determined to entertain the company at a public ball, which, though not in character with the other proceedings, it was thought that the fairer portion of the

visitors would not object to. Tidings so interesting soon reached Phœbe; and, despatching a messenger to Gainsford for the necessary, or perhaps we should say, *un*necessary, adornments, she forwarded a note to Eleanor, couched in this wise:—

MY DEAREST ELEANOR,

I HAVE only time to write a line, just to tell you the *delightful* news which has taken all here by *surprise*, that our neighbours at Mavering intend to give a *grand ball;* and as I happened to mention your name to dear Mrs. Windham, she *insists* on my writing to invite you, and orders me to say *you must come.* So mind we will take *no excuse.* Adieu, dearest Eleanor,

Your ever affectionate,

PHŒBE.

P.S. I had nearly forgotten to say that Mr. Windham will send over the carriage for you on Tuesday, *the great day.* If he were not a Benedict, and old enough to be your *grandpapa,* I think *somebody* would be inclined to call him out for preventing *him* from bringing you. But this is *entre nous.*

P.P.S.—By the bye, there is such a *singular* young man here, the editor of the Mavering newspaper. I think you'll like him, and I'm sure *he'll like you.*

Eleanor would gladly have declined this invitation, wishing, in her present situation, to keep aloof from society, as the best means of preserving her incognito; but to refuse an attention so kindly proffered would, she felt, be ungracious, and might possibly give offence. With reluctance, therefore, and with an unaccountable feeling of depression which she could not shake off, and which

haunted her like an evil presentiment, she wrote an affirmative reply to Phœbe; and, on the appointed day, Mr. Windham's carriage drove up to the door of her cottage, and bore her off to the Grange.

There she was most cordially received, both by Mrs. Windham and the antiquary, while Phœbe, glad of a companion of her own sex and age, eagerly welcomed her. She had a thousand things to say, but all communications had to be deferred, as Eleanor, through a mistake of the servant, arrived very late; and they had barely time to make their preliminary arrangements, when the great business of preparation had to be commenced.

The whole district, far and near, was in commotion; and every kind of vehicle came rolling into Mavering, and made its way to the assembly rooms. Here everything had been arranged in a successful though simple manner; and if there were no stately mirrors or costly candelabra, the festooned walls, the local flags and banners, and other impromptu decorations, produced a picturesque effect. The company was miscellaneous, embracing, in one festal throng, the rural aristocracy for miles round, and all the fashion of the town; and though some of the costumes might not have passed at Mayfair, it would have been difficult to find anywhere prettier faces or brighter eyes. The band was not Weippert's, but it played well and effectively, and its jocund strains animated the hearts, as well as the feet, of the guests.

The ball-room was already crowded when Eleanor and Phœbe arrived, under the matronly wing of Mrs. Windham. Captain Raffles, who had been lying in wait for the purpose, instantly laid siege to Phœbe, and before she could contrive an escape, carried her off, apparently no willing partner, to the first quadrille. Meanwhile, Mrs. Windham launched into deep converse with a friend, abstracting her

attention from Eleanor, who, looking round, was startled to perceive Danvers. The recognition was mutual, and the baronet bowed, at the same time making towards her; but, at this moment, she was overtaken by another surprise, in the person of Harold, who could not repress an exclamation as he suddenly came upon her.

"Is it possible?" he cried. "Miss—"

"Staveley," said Eleanor, quickly, and with an alarmed glance in the direction of Danvers.

Harold followed her eye, and seeing on whom it rested, instinctively divined her fears. There was no time to deliberate, for the baronet was close upon them; and Harold glanced, with a gesture easily interpreted, at a neighbouring group, who were just forming a quadrille. Eleanor yielded her hand, and in an instant they had taken their places, and she felt reassured and cheered. Harold, on his side, was happier than he had long been. If separation had lulled his passion for Eleanor, neither absence, nor time, nor distance could subdue it; and it now glowed with all its early ardour, and all its pristine intensity. The crater had slept, but was not extinct; and thoughts, hopes, feelings, the burning lava of his heart, burst forth in a torrent at the first throe. He recalled the moment when he last stood by her side in the dance; and again, as then, the music to him was, not in the swelling harmony of the band, but in her step, in her face, in the wavy motions of her form; above all, in the accents of her voice, which swept the cords of his heart like the breath of inspiration.

But that voice soon involuntarily brought him to think more of her than himself, though Eleanor's own first thought was of home.

"Can you tell me anything of my father, Mr. Arkworth?" she said. "Is it long since you saw him?"

"It is," replied Harold, a little embarrassed. "I have not seen him since you left Kensington."

"Indeed," said Eleanor. And she added quickly—"Did you part friends?"

"With Sir Blundell, yes! I could not do otherwise; for to me he was always kind; but I had some difference with Mr. Moneypenny, and that led to our separation."

"Then, you can tell me nothing of my father?"

"Nothing, I am sorry to say."

Eleanor sighed. "As you probably know the circumstances under which I left home, you may judge how anxious I am about him," she said; "and though—" she stopped abruptly, and raising his eye, Harold saw Danvers close at their side. The baronet, so haughty at their last meeting, met his glance with a friendly bow and smile.

"You are troubled at the discovery of your secret," said Harold to Eleanor.

"I am, indeed," she replied, with suppressed agitation. "Sir Everard Danvers is the last person I should wish to have known it, and, were it possible, I would do almost anything to avoid him."

"If you would like to leave, I can procure a carriage, and escort you home."

"That might offend my friends, and create new difficulties," returned Eleanor. "No, I must remain."

The dance was over, and Harold thought they might escape in the promenade; but Danvers, seizing the opportunity, threw himself before them.

"Miss Haughton, let me tell you how delighted I am to meet you," he said, unrepelled by Eleanor's distant manner: "and not the less so, as I was at Kensington yesterday, and saw Sir Blundell."

This was enough to secure Eleanor's attention; and Harold, with some chagrin, resigned her to the wily

baronet, with whom she walked away in earnest conversation. Meanwhile, his own meeting with Eleanor had not been unobserved; and Phœbe felt both nettled and hurt that he had danced with another, instead of seeking herself.

"You will lose Miss Staveley yet, if you are not alert," she said apart to Ashleigh, as he came up.

"Have I not more reason to fear for you, seeing the dangerous company you are in?" replied Ashleigh, with a glance at the Captain.

"Oh! never mind me," returned Phœbe. "I can take care of myself."

"And Miss Staveley can't, you think! That is uncharitable."

"I made no such reflection on Miss Staveley, who appears to know very well how to take care of herself, without any assistance from others." And Phœbe spoke with a little spite.

"No doubt," said Ashleigh, gravely; "she is in every respect exemplary."

"Of course, *you* will say so."

"And you, too, I'm sure; and every one who knows her."

"Pray, Mr. Ashleigh, let us drop the subject. One would imagine I had been attacking Miss Staveley, since you think it necessary to take up her cause so warmly."

"Hoity-toity!" said the Squire; "why what's the matter with the belle of Gainsford to-night? There, don't frown, or you'll kill not only me, but half the men in the room. What have I said, what have I done, to offend?"

"No matter," replied Phœbe, her good humour suddenly returning, as she saw Harold coming towards her; "for this time I forgive you, and, in token of pardon, there

is my hand, which I command you to retain for the next quadrille."

"The injunction is a privilege," returned Ashleigh, gallantly.

"My dear Phœbe," interposed Mrs. Windham, detaining her, and speaking in a low tone, "where are you going? There is Mr. Arkworth coming, and I thought you intended to dance with him."

"I can't now, for I'm engaged."

"How tiresome! But it's no business of mine, and I'll neither meddle nor make—only the poor young man will be very much disappointed."

"Oh, he'll recover, be assured, and find plenty to console him. How do you do, Mr. Arkworth? I declare you look as if you'd been wandering in the old abbey, and seen a ghost."

"Not a ghost, but an evil spirit," said Harold, with a touch of bitterness.

Phœbe turned a wistful glance upon him, and the bright smile on her lip vanished. It seemed, indeed, as if an evil spirit had come among them.

"You've lost her this time," said Mrs. Windham to Harold, as the Squire led Phœbe away. "Why were you not here before?"

"I came to pay my respects to you as soon as I entered the room," replied Harold, "but you were engaged; and as I met a friend at the moment, I joined a quadrille with her, and have only just got away."

"And may I ask the name of the lady you danced with?"

"Miss Staveley," said Harold, colouring as he pronounced the assumed name.

"Miss Staveley!" repeated Mrs. Windham, knitting her brows. "Well, it's no business of mine." But the good lady, notwithstanding, appeared vexed, as indeed she

was, thinking it a piece of presumption on the part of Miss Staveley, a teacher of music, to thwart an arrangement of hers, however unconscious all parties might be that such an arrangemant was intended.

"I don't know how Miss Mayburn dances with the Squire," observed Captain Raffles to Harold, as Mrs. Windham turned away; "he's so slow. Have you never remarked how deuced slow your country gentlemen are in a quadrille? Sir Roger de Coverley and that style of concern they can manage; but when it comes to science, to the light fantastic toe, they're beat. We're the men for that."

"You think so," said Harold, abstractedly.

"Think! I'll take you a bet on it, and we'll have a trial, if you like."

"Oh, dear, no!"

"Not in your way, eh? Well, the fact is so, and reason why—we have the girls with us! There you come at it. They like the sword and they like the pen; and if we make an alliance—if we don't spoil each other's game" (and here the Captain cast his hawk's eye on Phœbe)—"the field's our own. There's plenty of room for us; and as for squires and landed gentry, I don't care that for them." And the Captain snapped his fingers with more ardour than was consistent with his declaration.

As regarded Harold, he was in no present danger, as the young man's thoughts were turned, not on Phœbe, but Eleanor, whom he watched with covert but eager glances from a distance. As he saw her listening to Danvers, his heart misgave him, and she seemed like a bird in the net of the fowler.

"You have not heard of your papa since you left home?" said Danvers, with a quick perception of the avenue to her heart.

"No," replied Eleanor, almost inaudibly.

"Then you will be glad to learn he is well and happy."

"Oh, yes! yes! that is indeed a relief," replied Eleanor, her eyes brimming with tears. "You are sure he —he is happy?—that he does not grieve about me, or, at least, look troubled and anxious?"

"I can only say he seemed in excellent spirits yesterday."

"Ah, I am forgotten," murmured Eleanor.

"You must not think that. Indeed, I believe Sir Blundell was anxious at first, but I understood he received a letter from you, giving a favourable account of your position, though not revealing your address; and probably this has more reconciled him to your absence."

"That is what I wished, and it is consoling to know he received my letters,—for I have written several."

"No doubt they all reached him; but, to say truth, I have not been much at Kensington lately, though I frequently see Sir Blundell."

There was a pause. Eleanor, who had only joined Danvers with a view of inquiring about her father, finding he could tell her no more, would have withdrawn, but that strange influence which the baronet exercised at will on all who approached him, operated on her like a spell, and she could not shake it off. He could almost read her thoughts: he knew there was a feeling against him in her breast, which he must remove and efface, before he could appear in a favourable light; and to this task he now set himself.

"Since you have left home, I need not conceal from you my reason for not going to Nampced House so often," he said. "You are, perhaps, not aware of the relations which once subsisted between me and Lady Haughton?"

Eleanor felt her colour rise, and knew not how to reply.

"I mean, of course, before her marriage," pursued Danvers. "She was then engaged to me."

"Indeed."

"Yes; not—let me do justice to my own feelings—owing to any preference on my part, but through the manœuvres of her mother, and because I was led to believe the preference was on her side for me."

"Pardon me, sir; but I have no desire to hear these explanations," said Eleanor, coldly; and her eye involuntarily turned on a ring which encircled his finger, and which she recognised, with all her old feelings, as the one she had seen presented to him by Rosalie, on the morning of her marriage. Danvers saw directly the incident was known to her, though how he could not imagine; and his first object was to counteract this bad impression.

"You are quite right," said he, deferentially. "I only wish to add that as soon as I heard of Lady Haughton's alliance with Sir Blundell—which was not till I actually saw them going into church—I begged her to return me a ring I had given her, as a pledge of our engagement. This"—he held up his finger—"is it. I wear it from mere fancy. Lady Haughton once tried playfully to recover it—you may remember coming in at the moment—but I would not give it up; and since that time we have scarcely been friends."

Eleanor's heart was lightened by this explanation, which, untrue in every particular, fully effected the object intended; and her conscience reproached her for having misjudged this man, who, while vindicating himself, forbore as much as possible from reflecting on Rosalie, notwithstanding that she had [illegible]ived and wronged him.

"But I take up your time with these statements, which can have little interest for you," said Danvers, satisfied

with what he had done; "and I am preventing you from dancing. If you are not engaged, may I have the honour of your hand in the next quadrille?"

"I shall be most happy, if you will permit me first to introduce you to Mrs. Windham, the lady who brought me here," said Eleanor.

It had been well if she had thought of this before; for Mrs. Windham, good-natured though she was, was susceptible on such points, and annoyed at the omission.

"I can't say I am much struck with your new friend, Phœbe," she said. "It's very odd behaviour, I think, to go away as she has done, with any one who asks her, and without saying a word to me."

"She certainly does not stand on ceremony," replied Phœbe.

"Not at all. Pray who introduced her to you?"

"Herself."

"Oh! then I don't wonder at her lapses. It's no business of mine, and I know your papa has peculiar notions about things; but I'm really surprised he should allow you to associate on such terms as you do with a young woman of whom he knows nothing. Who can tell where she came from, or what were her antecedents? For my part, I half suspect her to be a cunning *intriguante*."

"Oh no!" said Phœbe. Yet, as the thought was suggested, numerous little incidents occurred to her mind which seemed to lend it confirmation.

"Well, I wouldn't interfere for the world," pursued Mrs. Windham; "and, of course, as your friend, I shall continue to treat her with the greatest politeness; but if I were you, I should not be so intimate for the future. That's all, you see! But here she comes, in charge of a stranger—a distinguished looking man certainly! Who is he?"

"I don't know, I'm sure," answered Phœbe, rather sharply; "but he seems bewitched with her, as all the men are."

"They're all making way for him as if he were somebody of consequence. Ah! Mr. Windham knows him, I declare."

And, indeed, the worthy antiquary, who prided himself on his bow, which he had learnt in Paris, bent to the earth as Danvers approached.

"Mr. Windham, I have a great favour to ask you," said Danvers, in his blandest tones. "May I beg you to present me to your estimable lady?"

"Who can he be?" murmured Mrs. Windham to Phœbe.

"My dear," said her husband, "here is one of the best friends of Mavering—Sir Everard Danvers, the county member."

At the mention of the potent name, Mrs. Windham made a gracious obeisance.

"I have had the good fortune to meet with an old friend in your ward, Miss Staveley, Mrs. Windham," said Danvers; "and if you have made no engagement for her, I should wish to have the honour of dancing with her in the next quadrille."

"By all means, Sir Everard." And Danvers led Eleanor away.

"What do you think now?" asked Phœbe of Mrs. Windham. But she gave no heed to her reply, as, on looking up, she happened to observe Harold, and saw his eyes fixed on the receding figure of Eleanor, as if they were spell-bound.

"How he watches her!" she murmured. "But it's what he said—*the evil spirit!*"

And when the two girls sought their pillow that night, or rather with the morning's dawn, the spirit of evil had *really* begun his work.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE FUGITIVE.

It is time to return to Amy, whom we left in the power of Hawker, in the chaise on Hampstead Heath.

The poor girl, almost stifled by the cloak thrown over her face, bewildered and terrified, was unable to cry out, even if it had been of any avail in a spot so lonely; and the chaise was already in motion before she rallied. Then she sprang to the door in an agony of terror, but was pushed back by Hawker, who, insensible alike to entreaties and tears, at length, by his threats, frightened her into silence. She sank back in her seat, seeing resistance would be useless, and distracted by a thousand conjectures as to the object of her captors, none so black as the reality. Her innocent mind could conceive nothing depraved, and she could only form a conception of her situation from the stories she had heard of kidnapped children, carried away by gipsies. And what grief and anxiety would her disappearance occasion her father, and—for she recurred to both by the same impulse—Harold! At these thoughts her tears flowed afresh, and she gave herself up to despair.

The carriage dashed on, and, amidst the silence, she could hear the crack of the postillion's whip, as he kept the horses at full speed, flying along with incredible swiftness. There was no light, and the dark night frowned through the sashes like an ogre, menacing further horror. But, grim as it seemed, what would Amy not have given, while borne she knew not whither, to have found herself out on

the road, instead of with that silent, mysterious, terrible man, whose figure she could see through the deep shadow, and whose eye, though unseen, she felt.

On they flew, never stopping, never abating their speed—now, to judge from the jolts and jerks, penetrating a lane, now traversing the high road, but, as it seemed, avoiding villages and towns. The anxieties of the day had been so great, first for her father, and then for herself, and she was so worn with exhaustion and fatigue, that Amy, with all her terrors, could not keep herself awake. Gradually she gave way to a feeling of lethargy, which craved for nothing but rest, and, for the time, she was reckless what became of her, so that she could close her eyes. But even sleep could not render her unconscious: in her troubled dreams she was still in the chaise, still on her journey, still sensible of the presence of her gloomy keeper.

Hawker, though he could distinguish only the outlines of her form, knew by her respiration she was asleep, and was now more at his ease. While she remained alert, he had felt like a prisoner himself, and dreaded every moment that some accident might bring them in contact with passers-by, and effect her deliverance. Continual excess had told upon his nerves, and he rather shrank from being in the dark, while, on the other hand, he could not remain long out of the open air without a sense of suffocation, which, when at home, often drove him gasping into the street. He had, besides, the drunkard's thirst, never to be allayed, and waited impatiently for an opportunity of obtaining, at a sequestered inn, the fiery draught for which he was ever yearning. At length the chaise stopped to change horses; bending over Amy, he ascertained that she continued asleep; and then noiselessly opened the carriage door, closed it behind him with the same caution, and rushed into the inn.

Amy awoke as he was alighting. Her presence of mind, however, chained her to her seat, and she remained perfectly still, not daring to raise her eyes, lest her condition should be discovered. But, swift as thought, she conceived the design of getting out by the opposite door, and making her escape. Should she fly at once, or first see what had become of her keeper? As she hesitated, the carriage, which had been lit up by a gleam of light from the inn, again became dark, and she saw some one looking in at the sash. It was Hawker, who, as he entered the hostelry, felt a misgiving, and hurried back to assure himself she had not stirred. He withdrew as quickly as he appeared, and Amy knew now that not an instant was to be lost. She crept to the further door, softly turned the handle, and, to her dismay, found it would not open. After a renewed attempt, with the same result, she determined to steal out by the door next the inn, since, at the worst, she could only be intercepted, and if she did not accomplish her flight directly, Hawker would return. The light from the open door of the inn, only a few paces distant, streamed on to the carriage, so that her figure stood clearly out as she appeared on the steps, but the ostler and postillion were engaged with the horses, and did not look round at the moment. With rapid steps she gained the side of the road, plunged into the deep shadow, and, climbing over a gate, found herself in a field. It was plain from the uproar behind that her flight was already known, and terror lent wings to her feet and nerve to her heart. Never turning her head, though voices were heard and lights were in motion, she darted along in the shadow of the hedge, scarcely perceiving it was everywhere so dark, that, at a little distance, no object could be seen. A gap admitted her to another field, which she traversed with the same speed, and arrived at a lane, so

torn with ruts and holes, that it was evidently but seldom used. It brought her, however, to a public road, which she judged to run in a different direction from that she had quitted, and, indifferent where else it might lead, she hurried on, trembling and breathless. She imagined pursuers in every blast of wind, in every whirl of the fallen leaves, in every rustle of the high, naked hedge. But, covered by the darkness, her steps could not easily be tracked, and, at that dead hour, the road was perfectly deserted. Not a single vehicle came to break the loneliness and the silence; not a house—for she passed several —threw a taper's light out on the sleeping world; and the young girl was alone with night and nature.

After a time, she was so exhausted, that she could go no further, and she sank down on the roadside to rest herself. It was a necessity; for, as she sat, she trembled, starting at every sound. Soon she was again on her feet, proceeding at the same pace, in the same direction, and regardless for the moment of pain and fatigue, so that she could place a distance between herself and her enemy.

The solitude of the road was at last disturbed. First a wagon, with its slow heavy team, came rumbling along announcing its approach from a distance; then swifter wheels were heard, and several light vehicles made their appearance. Morning, as usual in winter, rose slowly and sullenly, like a sluggard loth to leave his warm couch in the clouds. No glad lark welcomed his coming, no bright sunshine streamed from his eye; but still, through dim light and curtained sky, his presence was felt, and the fresh air rose to meet him with a tribute of incense.

Amy now met labourers going to their work, and more than one voice, as the dusky figures passed, bade

her a friendly good morning, while others saluted her with a ribald jest, which, however, she did not understand. The light increased; passengers and vehicles were more numerous, houses became more frequent; and, even to Amy's unpractised eye, everything indicated the vicinity of a town. At last, it stood before her in a mass, like a great hive, with churches rising up in sharp pointed spires, as if directing the way to heaven; and that thought, more than pealing bell, woke up Amy's spirit, and it communed with itself and its Maker.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE FEMALE PHILOSOPHER.

Amy knew not what to do when she entered the town. It was now broad day: the long, narrow streets, at first almost lifeless, became full of bustle; and gay shops displayed their commodities to the public gaze. The young girl wandered along, jaded and listless. Wholly without money, she was unable to procure either food or shelter, and after a day and night so harassing, she was in too great need of both. She walked round and round the town, to and fro, up and down its tortuous thoroughfares, till she was ready to drop, and yet she feared to pause. But at length exhausted nature could do no more, and, leaning against a lamp-post, just in front of a baker's shop, she came to a stand, and wistfully eyed the loaves in the adjacent window.

"*Don't you feel well,* young lady?" asked a voice.

And Amy, with some alarm, found herself confronted by a tall, gaunt-looking lady, who scanned her white face and drooping form with suspicious interest.

Amy shook her head.

"Ah! I see how it is," pursued the lady. "You've run away!"

Amy looked frightened, and could not repress an exclamation.

"Oh, never fear!" said the lady, soothingly. "I'm not going to have you taken up, nor to tell any one: so your secret's quite safe. But you mustn't stop out in the street, as that would be a sure way of getting caught. Besides, you're hungry and tired, poor child, and I'm sure you'll be glad of a little rest."

"But where can I obtain it?" said Amy, despairingly. "I know no one here, and I have no money."

"Then, come home with me," returned the lady; "and I will take care of you, and make you as comfortable as I can."

Her tone and kind words reassured Amy, and, with child-like trustfulness, she accepted the invitation, and accompanied her new acquaintance up the street. They stopped before a respectable though old-fashioned house; the lady, without saying a word, opened the door with a latch-key; and they entered.

Amy followed her conductor into a gloomy back parlour, and fairly sank into a chair, which stood near the door.

"Poor girl, you're quite spent," said the lady; "and no wonder, seeing it's twenty-four hours and three minutes since you tasted food."

Amy made a gesture as if she would correct the statement.

"Don't contradict," cried the lady; "for if there's one

thing on which I plume myself, it's the accuracy of my calculations. I never err, and the reason is plain. I always begin with an hypothesis. This is the basis of all calculation and all deduction. Without an hypothesis Kepler could not have drawn up a table of the planets, nor could Leverrier, when he accounted for the perturbations of Uranus, have put his finger on a spot in the heavens, and said, There you'll find another world. How could I have known your whole history, if I hadn't started the hypothesis that you'd run away from school?"

"But—" Amy began—

"There you go again," said the lady, "trying to create a difficulty, when everything is as clear as the day. Take this, my child, as the first law of metaphysics—nothing is so true as the result of mathematical analysis. But enough of this for the present. You want your breakfast, and would give the whole Principia for a cup of coffee."

Amy, who had never been accustomed to such learned conversation, and scarcely understood its meaning, was at first half inclined to think the speaker was a little demented; but her manner was so composed, and, at the same time so gentle, that she quickly dismissed the suspicion. The lady, meanwhile, rang the bell, summoning a stolid-looking servant, whom she directed to bring up breakfast, and Amy was provided with the refreshing beverage to which she had alluded, and which, in her situation, was indeed worth all the philosophy in existence.

Amy ate but sparingly, being, in fact, more worn than hungry, and longing for repose. This did not escape the notice of her hostess, who watched her every look, though in such a manner as hardly to be apparent.

"It's time you went to bed," she said, looking at her watch. "You've now been on your feet nineteen hours and five minutes to a second, and in that time you've

walked no less than thirty-six miles and a furlong—a great achievement at your age. Poor child! I declare she's gone to sleep as she sits. Such machines we are—always governed by laws!"

Amy had really fallen asleep, and, this time, was happily oblivious, both of her troubles and her situation. On awaking, she found herself extended on the sofa, carefully covered over, while Miss Whiffler—for it is time to give her hostess a name—sat at an adjacent table, poring over a problem of Euclid.

The young girl surveyed, with a bewildered and half-abstracted gaze, that hard-featured face, itself a problem; and then scanned the sober furniture, the panelled walls, the ceiling hung with cobwebs, and the murky window, all in keeping with the picture. Who was this eccentric woman, and what could be her motive in receiving her into her house? Notwithstanding the hard lessons of adversity, Amy was too young and too inexperienced to attach due importance to such an inquiry. In that trustful time of youth, we harbour no suspicions; we lean upon the reed of human sympathy, and often, when the strain is greatest, it snaps beneath the weight. But Amy had yet to discover what a fragile staff it was.

"What, awake!" exclaimed Miss Whiffler, as the young girl sat up. She looked at her watch, and added—"There must be some mistake here. By my reckoning, you ought to have slept half an hour longer—a prodigious error in a mathematical calculation, and utterly unaccountable."

Amy appeared a little frightened at the mistake.

"Let me see," pursued Miss Whiffler: "you quitted the school at fifteen seconds past three P.M., yesterday, and arrived here at six minutes past ten this morning, having, as I remarked before, been nineteen hours five minutes on the road, during which you walked thirty-six miles and a

furlong. Now, what should be the proportion of sleep to the time and distance?—what do you make of it?"

"I've had a very nice sleep, thank you," replied Amy, "and now feel so refreshed, I think I—"

"That's not the point," interrupted Miss Whiffler. "Your feelings are immaterial, except in so far as they bear out the result, and the result conforms to the deduction. I must go over the calculation again another time. There's evidently a serious error somewhere, and I shan't be able to rest till it's cleared up."

Again she bent over her problem, and became so absorbed in its mazes that, in a few moments, Amy and her mistake were forgotten. Amy longed to break the silence, and say she was now desirous to depart, having determined to make her way back to London, and seek her father; but this mysterious woman, with her incoherent talk and strange demeanour, had thrown such a spell over her, that she could not bring herself to speak. While she pondered and hesitated, Miss Whiffler suddenly started up.

"That's it!" she cried, slapping herself on the forehead. "My watch is five minutes too fast, and this little difference upset the whole calculation. Allowing for that, you were quite right to wake at the time you did, and the result and deduction beautifully correspond. Now I can eat my dinner in peace."

The dinner, brought up by the stolid domestic, was served in an adjoining room; and, if plain, was substantial and wholesome. Amy marvelled at the havoc committed by Miss Whiffler, whose philosophy, like Barebones' religion, was not superior to creature comforts, and, together with more than one full plate, now disappeared. The cloth removed, she produced a black bottle, and, with a nice perception of quantities, mixed herself a glass of brandy and water, which she called a tonic.

"It's prescribed for me by my brother the Doctor," she said—"a wonderful man, as you'll say when you see him, which you shall directly he returns. Ugh!" she continued, after a prolonged draught. "How strange it is that medicines which renovate the health, should be unpalatable, while liquids of an unwholesome character are generally pleasant. Why should brandy be good for the system, at the same time that it is offensive to the taste?" And Miss Whiffler emptied her tumbler; while Amy, unable to assign a reason for the phenomenon, remained silent.

"What is brandy?" resumed Miss Whiffler, as she prepared a second glass—"simply the essence of the vine. Now the vine, we know, also produces wine, which is an agreeable beverage, but deleterious. Well, here is the spirit of the plant, its virtue, brought out in the brandy, and it's nasty. The same principle applies in everything: it's a law."

As Amy did not dispute this conclusion, Miss Whiffler was obliged to drop the subject, and revert to her unfinished problem in Euclid, from which, after the manner of the royal Dane, she gradually subsided into a doze.

Amy sat quiet and pensive. Her young heart, indeed, was agitated by a thousand reflections, not unmingled with misgivings. Now she thought of her father, now of Harold, now of her late abduction, and now, with something of apprehension, of her strange hostess. She was impatient to be gone, but, as gathering shadows foretokened the close of day, she saw too clearly that to proceed to London without assistance was impossible. This she determined to supplicate from Miss Whiffler directly she awoke, an event which in due time occurred; and Amy, mustering all her resolution, then made her appeal.

"So you want to leave me, after my affording you protection and shelter when you most needed it?" cried Miss

Whiffler, interrupting her. "Well, perhaps I ought not to blame you, since you only act in obedience to a law, by which we are all more or less selfish and ungrateful."

"Believe me, I am not ungrateful," exclaimed Amy; "and I shall remember your kindness as long as I live."

"I'll tell you what it is," said Miss Whiffler, abruptly; "you must stop till the Doctor comes home. He'll be here in a few days, and I don't like being by myself."

"If I can only write and say where I am, I will remain with pleasure."

"That is but reasonable," replied her hostess; "and may be done at once."

At a touch of the bell the attendant appeared with lights; and pen, ink, and paper were placed before Amy, while Miss Whiffler bent over her with a theatrical air.

"Now write!" she said, and Amy obeyed.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE MESMERIST.

A MONTH had passed, and Amy, to her own surprise, was still at Miss Whiffler's, whose brother, the Doctor, had not yet made his appearance. Amy had written both to her father and Miss Sparkins, but had received no answer; it never occurred to her that her hostess, to whose hand the letters had been entrusted, had probably not put them in the post. The silence of her friends made her more anxious

to depart; but, day after day, she was persuaded, on one pretext or another, to prolong her stay, and, indeed, knew not how to cast off the influence by which she was enthralled.

One night, soon after she had retired to her room, she heard sounds of bustle below, and guessed that the long-expected Doctor had arrived. Her conjecture proved correct, and Miss Whiffler had at length the satisfaction of welcoming her brother.

The Doctor was a tall, lean man, of some fifty years, with a stoop in the shoulders, which almost doubled up his chest; a head nearly denuded of hair; and sharp angular features. He had been on a six weeks' tour, lecturing in different parts of the country, but walked in and took his seat, without a word of greeting to his sister, as if he had been absent but half an hour.

"So you've got me a subject," he said, after a brief pause.

"Yes," replied Miss Whiffler.

"The Type?"

"Fair complexion, blue eyes, hair of a dark brown, and oval face."

"Promising. What is the organisation?"

"You know the law! imaginative and susceptible."

"But laws have exceptions. Nature, so beautiful, so accurate, so precise, is also capricious—for nature is a female. In the lectures I am about to deliver, it is necessary to produce an effective illustration, and this can only be achieved through an organisation highly sensitive. How do you know the girl possesses this?"

"By an hypothesis."

"Hang your hypothesis!"

"Hang my hypothesis! That's a pretty return for all the trouble I've taken. If you scout an hypothesis, what becomes of the metaphysics of common things?"

The Doctor, whether from ignorance or contempt, deigned no answer to this inquiry.

"Have you subjected her to any test, any experiment?" he demanded.

"No. How could I, without your assistance?"

"Then, this is the first thing to do. I'll see her in the morning; and, after that, we'll put her in training. Nature is a fine thing — a beautiful thing, but it requires culture. Imagination must be kneaded"—and he worked his hands as if he were making a cake — "kneaded, and then it comes out in all its force and all its intensity."

The scene next morning, when Amy was introduced, might have impressed a less excitable temperament. The Doctor's return had been notified through the town, and brought to the house a flock of patients, who, as they arrived, were successively ushered into his presence. When Miss Whiffler introduced Amy, they were all seated opposite to each other, in two parallel rows, and the Doctor sat at the top, like a king in council. But there was such a repose, such a stillness, such a blank and fixed look about the group, that the figures seemed more like statues than living beings, and Amy's heart beat quick, as she noted the effect.

"So this is the subject?" said the Doctor. "Very good. I'm glad to see you, young lady." And he rose; when instantly, as by a common impulse, the patients on both sides sprang up, causing Amy to shrink back in alarm.

"Don't be frightened," cried the Doctor, with a grim smile. "These people will do you no harm." And he held out his hand to encourage her, when all the patients did the same.

"What does it mean? where am I?" cried Amy, clinging to Miss Whiffler, and fearing she had come among maniacs.

"It's a law — that's all," answered Miss Whffler. "Everything depends on laws, and by them all difficulties are cleared up."

"Yes," said the Doctor, "what you behold is one of the mysteries of nature—Nature, our instructress and mother. You see, these persons are all asleep, yet they obey my every motion. When I extend my hand to you, they do the same; and while my hand is held out, they are unable to draw back theirs. Now I drop mine, theirs fall like lightning." And as he spoke, so it was done. "Is not this wonderful?" he said.

"It is terrible!" murmured Amy, with pale lips.

"Not so," answered the Doctor; "for by this potent agency I am able to cure their diseases, to soothe their minds, to invigorate their systems. Ah! how bountiful, how excellent, how beautiful is nature! But you are agitated, my child. Sit down, and compose yourself."

Amy suffered Miss Whiffler to place her in a chair; and the Doctor, leaving the charmed circle, came and stood by her side.

"Let me feel your pulse," he said. "Ah! you've frightened yourself, but you'll soon be better. Just look at me—steadily, fixedly!"

Amy, indeed, could not remove her eyes from his: a strange feeling stole over her, a sort of stupefaction, which seemed to be gradually rendering her powerless; and, uttering a wild cry, she rushed from the room.

"Not yet ripe!" exclaimed the Doctor; "but the faculties only want culture. A little training will do it."

CHAPTER XXX.

HUSBAND AND WIFE.

THE appearance of Danvers at the Mavering ball was preceded by circumstances which it is necessary, for the perfect comprehension of this history, to introduce here.

On the day following the abduction of Amy, as the baronet was calmly smoking a chibouk, his valet surprised him with the announcement that Hawker, whom he supposed to be at the other end of the kingdom, was in the hall, and desired an interview. Instantly he surmised there had been some mishap; and this apprehension was confirmed when Hawker appeared, wearing a look of effrontery, for which he was evidently indebted to copious potations.

"Well, what now?" demanded Danvers, frowning, as the servant left them together.

"Gone again, baronet!" replied Hawker, "going, going, gone! the bird's flown: the girl's hooked it,—shot the moon—bolted!"

"You've let her escape!"

"I just stepped out—"

"Just step out now—out of my presence, and out of my house," said Danvers, interrupting him, but speaking in a tone as calm as it was determined; "and never let me see your face again."

"Not this time, baronet: try me once more, I beg," said Hawker, sobered by his patron's resolute air.

"Will you go away, or do you want me to send for a policeman?" returned Danvers.

Hawker eyed him hard, but his glance drooped before the steady, stern gaze of Danvers, and he felt that he must succumb.

"You mean to say you'll cut off my monthly pay?"

"Most certainly."

"Then, what's to become of me?"

"You should have thought of that when you neglected my commands: you've no claim on me."

"You won't allow me anything?"

"Not a rap."

"But if I recover the girl, and take her down to the old house?"

"Then, as I said before, I'll provide for you for life."

"Then find her I will!" said Hawker, reeling out of the door. And as he reached the passage he muttered, "Yes, and when I do, rather than let her escape again, I'll finish her. Perhaps that's what he meant when he told me to use no violence. Fool, not to take the hint!"

But Danvers, actuated by no sentiment of pity, was not one to proceed to extremes when his purpose could be attained by milder measures, though, if there were no other way of gaining his ends, he was ready to resort to murder. He was, indeed, more concerned at Amy's escape, after he had so adroitly ensnared her, than his demeanour indicated, and he had strained his hold over Hawker further than he deemed altogether prudent, in order to stimulate him to effect her recapture. By habit and instinct a gambler, he carried the gambler's spirit into all his schemes, and often risked everything to gain a point. He had a confidence in fortune which, in truth, he seldom had cause to repent, and whatever difficulties arose he spread his toils with a firm belief that, in the end, they would prove effective.

While endeavouring to carry off Amy, he pursued with equal pertinacity his design on Rosalie. To this he was stimulated not more by admiration of her beauty than by his wounded self-love, which could not forgive her marriage with Sir Blundell, when, but for the intervention of her mother, she might have been united to himself; and he resolved to take his revenge on Mrs. Addlefield by blasting the happiness of her daughter. From the moment of their rencontre at Miss Sparkins's—which was not so accidental on his part as he made it appear—and his subsequent visit to Nampced House, Lady Haughton had, with a few compunctious qualms, thrown aside the reserve in which she had steeled herself, and gradually yielded to the fascination he had cast over her. But, not content with this, Danvers sought to precipitate her ruin by creating a breach between herself and her husband, and, on returning from his vain search after Eleanor, Sir Blundell received an anonymous letter, stating that his wife was in the habit of secretly receiving a lover; that this individual was concealed behind the screen in the drawing-room the day before, on his unexpected appearance, and reminding him of the embarrassment his entry had occasioned. Without mentioning the circumstance to Rosalie, Sir Blundell cautiously made inquiries among the servants, but could learn nothing of any suspicious visitor; Danvers, it will be remembered, having arrived and departed by the window on the terrace. But the jealousy of mature age was aroused, and estrangement grew up between the baronet and his young wife, widened, as time sped on, by other letters of the same character, and by numerous little incidents corroborating their statements. Meanwhile, Rosalie received epistles of a similar tendency respecting Sir Blundell; she was offended at his coolness, and regarded it as "confirmation strong" of the anonymous letters, which continually drove her to Danvers

for counsel and consolation. All this time Danvers sedulously abstained from visiting Nampced House, but played his game so well that he contrived, through some channel or other, to be frequently in the company of Sir Blundell, finally worming himself into his confidence, while, as already observed, he was in constant communication with Rosalie, and met her every day in her drive or promenade.

Still Rosalie shrank from the chasm which seemed to yawn before her, and, at length, becoming impatient, Danvers changed his tactics. For a whole week he absented himself from the customary rendezvous, and, at the same time, beset Rosalie with a new wile, which he hoped would force her to seek him at his house. His expectation was realised, and as he was yet meditating on his recent interview with Hawker, his valet flung open the door, and ushered in a lady, whose close veil did not mask her features from his eye.

"Can it be you?" he exclaimed, with affected surprise, as they were left alone, and Lady Haughton partly raised her veil.

"Yes," replied Rosalie, unable to repress a blush at her situation. "Oh, Danvers! this fatal marriage—to what has it brought me!"

"And I may ask, to what has it brought me?" cried Danvers. "Has it not destroyed my happiness, and made my life a blank?"

"Could I believe that! but no!" said Lady Haughton. "Had it been so, you would not have left me for a week without a word, when you knew I should expect—that is," she continued, with some confusion, "that I had lately seen you every day, and must naturally wonder what had become of you. And I have been so in want of advice, too —of assistance."

"Had I known that, I would have flown to you, believe me, at all risks; yet the risk might have been great."

"Risk! Is it true, then, there could have been any? Oh, Danvers! I am in a maze—I am kept in constant agitation, in torment, by all this mystery. Only yesterday I received a threatening letter, which has so terrified me, I know not what to do. Alas! what indeed can I, when I have not a friend in the world?"

"You are cruel to say this, knowing I am devoted to you. Have I not shown that devotion in my looks and by my acts, because it was your pleasure I should not express it in words? and have I not, as you have just averred, attended you day after day, watching your every glance, and obeying your every caprice, when all this time my heart has been wrung by the bitter reflection that you slight and contemn me?"

"I! Danvers?"

"Do you not? Have you not come here to tell me so?"

"Oh, no! far from it." And she bowed her head, and gave way to a flood of tears.

"I can't endure this!" exclaimed Danvers. "Rosalie—dear Rosalie, now you are in distress, now you need consolation and sympathy, now indeed I must tell you how I love, how I adore you. Do not turn away; for my heart is full, and my feelings will not be repressed."

Her eyes rose to his, through her tears and her blushes, like the gleam of an April sun; and, for the moment, he was satisfied with his success.

"What happiness—could it have been!" she murmured. "But it is too late now; and as you have yourself said, I can't even meet you without danger. Read this." And she presented the threatening letter she referred to, ac-

cusing her of resorting to Kensington Gardens every day for the purpose of meeting a gentleman whom she could not receive at her own house, and who, it was easy to perceive, was her lover.

"This is certainly strange," said Danvers; "and shows some one to whom we are known is taking the trouble to watch us; for I have had a letter precisely similar."

"Is it possible?"

"Here it is!" And he produced a billet. "You will now understand why I refrained from meeting you as usual—though to me it was such a deprivation!"

"And I have missed you so!" said Rosalie, unguardedly. Yet, as she spoke, her heightened colour testified against her.

"Tell me so again—let me hear those words once more, dear, sweet Rosalie!" said Danvers, passionately; "and all my misery, all my despair, will be obliterated! You turn away. Do you, then, only raise the cup of bliss to my lips, that you may dash it to the ground?"

"What would you have of me? what can I say or do?" exclaimed Rosalie, in tones of anguish, and recoiling from the leap, the more it became imminent. "Ah, Danvers, be calm, be considerate! I have come to you in my perplexity and distress; and if you love, do not destroy me."

"I am silent," said Danvers. "It is plain that if I am to see you at all, it is here we must meet; and I will do nothing, nor say nothing, that can keep you away. Come when you will, under this roof you will always find a friend, and should you ever need it, a home."

"Thanks, thanks!" was Rosalie's almost inaudible reply.

"As for these letters," pursued Danvers, "it is clear they have both come from the same person. Is there no one whom you suspect?"

"No one."

"Think again; the hand is a woman's."

"Yes, but I don't recognise it."

"Because it is disguised; but it is a hand you have seen often, and ought to identify. In my opinion, these letters come from Eleanor Haughton."

"Surely not! Yet, now you mention it, the characters are like hers, although, as you say, disguised. And who else would be so interested in our proceedings? Yes, it is she, no doubt."

Here there was a knock at the street door, a peal so loud, that it made Rosalie start.

"Don't be disturbed," said Danvers. "I'll ring for my valet to deny me, so that we shall not be interrupted." As he passed the window to the bell, he exclaimed, hurriedly, "It must be Sir Blundell. It's his brougham."

Rosalie started up in alarm. "What shall I do?" she cried, agitatedly. "If he sees me here I am undone." And she darted towards the door.

"Stop!" said Danvers. "Not that way or you'll meet him, for I hear him coming up. The confounded fools have let him in."

"Then I am lost!"

"Not so," returned Danvers. And he led her towards an inner door. "In there you will be safe, and I will get rid of him directly, and then come to you. Hush!" He closed the door upon her, just as Sir Blundell, outstripping the servant who escorted him, and who was not aware that Danvers was engaged, burst into the room.

"Ah! my friend, I am so glad to find you at home," said Sir Blundell. "I have come to tell you the result. I have watched her, and it is all true—in fact, all."

"Impossible!" replied Danvers. "But tell me what you have discovered—only speak low, pray."

"Well, I have been every day to the gardens, and she has come there regularly till to-day, when she did not appear."

"And you saw her meet some one?" said Danvers, almost in a whisper, fearing that Rosalie would overhear.

"Well, no, not exactly."

"What did she do, then?"

"Why, now you put it to me, I can't say she did anything decisive; but there she was—there every day at the same time, just as the letter stated, and I can't think that in good taste—in fact, not perfectly correct."

"If this is all, pray don't let it annoy you, Sir Blundell. It's just possible, indeed, if a lover were in the case, that something might have happened to keep him away; but then you'd have seen her secret in her deportment. She would have paused now and then at a particular spot, where the assignations were usually kept; she would have quitted it reluctantly, loitered in the adjoining walks, and cast looks behind as she went away; she—"

"Stay," said Sir Blundell, "you have said enough; for you could not have more accurately described her conduct had you been present."

"She did all this?"

"All, and in a manner that left no doubt, making me, while I watched her, look as anxiously and eagerly for her expected lover as she could herself."

Danvers mused a moment. He had brought his machinations to such a point, that he was unwilling, when things were so far in train, to lose the opportunity of pushing Sir Blundell further; but, were he to do so now, the excited husband would probably be provoked to an outburst, which *might* reveal his duplicity to Rosalie. He thought it *better*, therefore, to say something of a soothing tendency,

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Husband and Wife

particularly as he was anxious for his departure, and another time he might, by a few dextrous innuendoes, easily rekindle his suspicions.

"We must not suffer ourselves to be misled, Sir Blundell," he remarked. "In these cases, we are apt to jump at conclusions, when there is not sufficient ground, being guided more by our feelings than our judgment. From my regard for you, I have thought a good deal over this matter, and I confess, bearing in mind what I have observed of Lady Haughton, and considering what has been the result of your recent reconnaissance, I can't think there is anything to warrant apprehension."

"I don't know," said Sir Blundell, doubtfully.

As he spoke he gazed abstractedly into the street, as if the haze of his thoughts completely bewildered him, but suddenly sprang back, exclaiming, "There's that horrid old woman—in fact, Mrs. Addlefield. She's coming in; and I wouldn't meet her on any account. I'll go in here." And he rushed to the inner door.

"Not there—not there, Sir Blundell," cried Danvers. But it was too late. Sir Blundell had reached the inner room, and confronted Rosalie.

Husband and wife were alike petrified, the one with astonishment; the other with shame and fear. Danvers, who had followed Sir Blundell in, alone stood calm and collected.

"Now you have spoiled a very pretty plot," he said to Sir Blundell.

"Plot!"

"Yes," continued Danvers, smiling. "Since you have precipitated an explanation, I must tell you, Sir Blundell, that Lady Haughton and Mrs. Addlefield came here together about half an hour ago, thinking that, though our intercourse has lately been suspended, they might call upon

me, as an old friend, to use my good offices with you, to bring about a termination of the unhappy misunderstanding which seems to have grown up among you. Hearing I expected you to call, Mrs. Addlefield thought it better to go away, and leave Lady Haughton here to meet you, promising to come back for her, which she has now done; but unfortunately—or perhaps I should rather say fortunately, since it has led to this *éclaircissement*—Lady Haughton's courage broke down when she heard you arrive, and she ran in here till I should prepare you for her appearance, which I was about to do when you discovered it yourself."

"I am sorry you consented to such an arrangement," remarked Sir Blundell.

"We ought to have known, sir, you were not one to be conciliated," said Rosalie, provoked.

"Let me entreat you to refrain from recrimination," cried Danvers; "and since you both honour me with your confidence, I venture, as your mutual friend, strongly to urge your reconciliation. Some of us may, indeed, have something to forgive; but who is there that has not also some need to be forgiven? From my own experience, I can say it is good to bear and *for*bear."

"Perhaps so," said Sir Blundell, softened, "but—"

"Nay, no buts—no hesitation, Sir Blundell," cried Danvers. "I can see Lady Haughton is longing to carry out the good old rule, and you must positively shake hands and be friends."

"Be it so," replied Sir Blundell, "if it is Lady Haughton's wish."

A gesture from Danvers exercised the required effect on Rosalie, and she held out her hand, which Sir Blundell, though with no show of warmth, accepted.

"This is indeed a joyful moment!" exclaimed Dan-

vers. "But I must bring in Mrs. Addlefield, that she may be a witness and a sharer of your happiness."

Mrs. Addlefield, who had come to consult him respecting the state of affairs at Nampced House, was waiting his appearance in the adjoining room with considerable impatience.

"Not a word!" said Danvers, as he hurried up to her. "Sir Blundell is here. He came in awkwardly just after Rosalie, and believes she has been left here by you, and that you have come back for her. I have mediated between them, and they are now on terms. Do you understand?"

"Perfectly," replied the complaisant mother.

"Then, come with me." And they passed to the other room.

"You are reconciled, then!" exclaimed Mrs. Addlefield, looking from one to the other. "Well, I have now lived long enough! Seeing you happy, united, strong in each other, I have nothing left to wish for, having all—religion can give." And she produced a handkerchief, and raised it to her eyes. But as Sir Blundell took no note of her emotion, and Rosalie stood perfectly impassive, she readily descried it was time to conclude a scene embarrassing to all.

"But we will not intrude further on our kind, kind friend," she said, "and I am sure you will both be glad to be at home. Come, Rosalie; come, dear Sir Blundell, my carriage is at the door, and we will all go together."

And so they went—husband, wife, and mother, all alike silent and sullen, and scarcely maintaining the appearance of their hollow reconciliation. But Danvers, the betrayer of each, retained the confidence of all, and was master of the situation.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE SPIRIT RAPPERS.

DANVERS was now at liberty to consider what steps he should take for the purpose of regaining possession of Amy; and he resolved, since he had discarded Hawker, to proceed himself on the road she had traversed, and, by instituting inquiries, endeavour to get on her track.

Amy, meanwhile, remained at the house of Doctor Whiffler, the mesmerist lecturer, and was duly subjected to the training he considered necessary for her perfect adaptation to his views.

On retreating from the Doctor's room, after her first initiation, she would have rushed into the street, but was stopped in the passage by the stolid servant, who resolutely barred egress; and the next moment she was overtaken by Miss Whiffler.

"Why, what ails the child?" cried the philosophic spinster. "She trembles like a leaf, and seems perfectly stunned. You must come up stairs, Amy, and lie down a while."

"Oh, no!" answered Amy. "Let me go home. Let me leave this house, and get out in the fresh air, or I shall die."

"Nonsense! There's nothing the matter with you, nor have you anything to complain of, but, on the contrary, every reason to be satisfied. Is there anything you want that you do not have?"

"You are very kind, I know; but I wish to be at home—to be with my father."

"Your father doesn't trouble himself about you, or when he received your letters, he would have come here, or, at least, have written to you."

"But, perhaps, the letters never reached him—perhaps he has gone away, and left no address."

"Then, how could you find him, even if you had the means of reaching London?"

How indeed! Amy's face evinced her perplexity.

"Come, be satisfied," said Miss Whiffler, leading her into the little back room. "The Doctor shall make inquiries about your father, and endeavour to find him. Meanwhile, you have nothing to do but to amuse yourself and be happy."

"I am not happy—I can't be happy, when I am separated from my friends," replied Amy; "and why should I live in idleness and dependence, when I am able to earn my bread? Do not think me ungrateful, but I live here in fear—fear of I know not what." And she could not repress her tears.

"That's it! you know not what you fear," said Miss Whiffler. "If you did know, you would rather rejoice; for you would see it was a thing not to be feared, but to be admired, coveted, and longed for. It is knowledge, it is wisdom, it is power—power over things unseen and unknown, power over others and over ourselves. It is the mastery over mighty laws, which afford an antidote for every ill, and, when developed, will change the destinies of the human race. But we will say no more now. As you don't want to lie down, we'll go into the garden, and perhaps the air will, as you say, do you more good."

Amy was indeed glad to inhale the fresh air, though it could not, in her present frame of mind, bring back the

colour to her cheek, or cheerfulness to her heart; and she had caught from the mesmerist an impression of gloom, which she was unable to shake off. As night approached, she learnt from Miss Whiffler that they must now share the same chamber, as that she had hitherto occupied would be required for the Doctor; and she felt glad that, while so depressed, she was not to be alone.

Not only were her feelings excited, not only was her imagination kindled, but all the trouble and anxiety through which she had passed, both on her father's account and her own, began to tell on her delicate frame. That sensitive organisation quivered in every muscle and fibre. The poor girl pined, silently and secretly—but how deeply!—for those she loved—for her father and for Harold; and amidst the silence of night, her thoughts turned upon them continually, and always with the same longing and the same despair.

Suddenly she heard a tap against the floor, seeming to come from beneath, and having a sound so peculiar, that in her excited state she could not resist a feeling of terror.

"Don't be frightened," said her wakeful bedfellow. "It's only my spirit."

Amy could not reply.

"What do you want?" demanded Miss Whiffler, apostrophising the unseen visitor.

Two taps on the floor followed this question.

"Am I to get a light?" pursued the lady.

One tap.

Miss Whiffler, without further ado, rose composedly from the bed, and ignited the candle. Amy peered timidly round, half expecting to behold a phantom, but could see only the gaunt figure of her hostess, who, indeed, in her long nightdress, looked a phantom herself.

"What's to be done now?" she demanded.

The response was a loud thumping under the bed.

"You want to know who the girl is?" said Miss Whiffler.

One tap.

"She's a relation of mine—a niece."

Here the thumping was renewed in a more violent and threatening manner, accompanied by a strange noise, like the muttering of a voice.

"I beg your pardon—I beg your pardon," cried Miss Whiffler, apparently in great trepidation. "I was afraid of giving offence, and so I called her a relation; but don't be angry, and I'll tell you the truth. She's only on a visit."

The muttering was now heard, without the thumping, but less distinctly, though the effect was still menacing.

"You must get up," whispered Miss Whiffler to Amy. "That will pacify him, and I've no doubt he'll be pleased with you, and perhaps do something strange to show he's in a good humour."

"I dare not," replied Amy, in accents scarcely audible. "I'm afraid even to open my eyes or to breathe. Yet, if we could escape into the street, I would try."

"Foolish! there's nothing to fear, so long as you obey his will; and as for escape, it's impossible."

Two taps.

"You wish her to rise?" said Miss Whiffler.

One tap.

"You hear?" whispered the spiritualist to Amy. "For mercy's sake, make haste, or you'll bring destruction on us both."

A furious thumping on the floor seemed to confirm her words; and Amy, hardly knowing what she did, sprang out of the bed.

Still the thumping was repeated.

"What can it be?" said Miss Whiffler. "Ah! I see he's vexed at your being agitated."

The thumping ceased, and there was a moment of silence, followed by three gentle taps.

"He wishes to know why you're so frightened," said Miss Whiffler to Amy. But Amy had neither word nor voice. "I understand, and will speak for you," pursued her hostess. And she said aloud—"She thinks, as you're a spirit, it's wicked to converse with you."

Two taps.

"He says it's not the case," interrupted Miss Whiffler, "and he'll prove it."

As she spoke, a tap sounded in an obscure corner, where a rack of books hung from the wall, and a large Bible fell down, and rolled on the floor.

"He means you're to look in the Bible, and you'll find the practice authorised," said the interpreter.

"No, no, I will not!" gasped Amy. "No! no!"

But Miss Whiffler, seizing her hand, drew her forward; and as they approached, the Bible flew open, displaying the 8th chapter of Isaiah, with a leaf turned down at the 19th verse.

"This is very clear," said Miss Whiffler. And she read the passage aloud—"'*Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep and that mutter.*' Now are you satisfied?"

Amy shook her head.

"You are not only weak, but stupid, and even stubborn," said Miss Whiffler. "Look at me. If there were anything wrong, or anything to be alarmed at, would I be so composed? Certainly not; but I know it is all correct, and the result of a law, which it would be as idle to fear as to resist. Now, by question and hypothesis, I'll ascertain who this spirit is, and then you'll see how unlikely he

is to hurt you." And she added aloud — "Are you there?"

One tap.

"Are you a good or evil spirit?"

Thumping and muttering.

"You are not evil, but good?"

One tap.

"Are you the spirit of a human being?"

One tap.

"Of a king? a warrior? a prophet? a philosopher? a poet?"

One tap.

"What poet?"

Here another volume fell from the bookshelf, and as it rolled down at her feet, Miss Whiffler picked it up.

"You are Shakespeare?" she said, looking at the title-page.

One tap.

"You told me this before, and I believe you; but how will you convince the girl?"

A tap came from under the table.

"You want her to sit down and write some verses at your dictation?"

One tap.

"Come," said Miss Whiffler to Amy, "come to the table and you'll now witness the operation of a mighty law, by which the dead enter into the living."

"This is too horrible!" cried Amy, clasping her hands over her eyes. "I can bear it no longer."

"You must obey, or we shall both suffer. See, the table is coming to you!"

And, in fact, the table slowly revolved on its castors, and advanced with a circular movement towards the spot

where they stood. Amy would have retreated, but her limbs were powerless.

The table, whirling round and round, moved right up to her, and then came to a stand.

"Sit down," said Miss Whiffler; and Amy sank into a chair, while her hostess procured writing materials, and placed a pen in her trembling hand. "Attend," she whispered, "and write what you hear."

But Amy, giving way to the terror and awe of the scene and her situation, could hear nothing; for the moment she was unconscious, and sight, hearing, and sense alike failed. On opening her eyes, she encountered the gaze, not of Miss Whiffler, but of her brother, the Doctor.

"Yes, look at me, my child," said the Doctor, making a pass with his hand—"hard, steady! that's the way! Oh! nature, nature!" And as he spoke, his hand passed quickly to and fro: "This is beautiful, this is divine!"

Amy was in a mesmeric sleep.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE LECTURE.

Some weeks had elapsed, when large posters announced through the town that Doctor Whiffler, at the request of numerous friends, would deliver a lecture at the literary institution, on Mesmerism and Clairvoyance, and produce a young girl as a notable example of their effects. At the appointed time, the large room appropriated for the lecture was crowded in every part, and numbers were unable to

gain admission. A sort of low stage, or platform, a step above the floor, was reserved for the lecturer, who early made his appearance, and was greeted with applause. This was several times renewed as the lecture proceeded, though all awaited with curiosity, and some impatience, the appearance of the girl, to whom it made frequent reference, and whose performances were to constitute the great feature of the evening.

At length, after working up the interest to a high point, the Doctor turned to a baize curtain, covering a niche in the wall, and drawing it back, disclosed what, from the skilful arrangement of the light, appeared to be a statue, so still and placid was the figure, and so motionless the drapery in which it was clothed. But no sculptor, with his utmost cunning, could impart to marble the exquisite contour, the witching grace, the delicacy of tone and finish, which made this figure, while it stood inanimate, seem to swell and breathe, proclaiming it a living woman. How she could so long preserve her classic attitude, without moving a hair, or relaxing a muscle, was a mystery, and indeed, to many of the spectators, appeared little short of a miracle.

"This," said the Doctor, when the applause subsided —"this is nature! How tame does it render art; and how pitiful by the side of her exquisite workmanship, are the highest conceptions of human genius. That figure is not stone, but flesh and blood, animated by an undying soul; and what is more marvellous, that soul is conscious, though the body sleeps. Body and soul are both in sympathy with mine, and in thought, will, and act respond to me."

As he spoke he threw up his hand, and the clairvoyante, without waking from her trance, raised hers; he knelt down, and she sank on her knee; he sprang to his feet, and the clairvoyante did the same.

"Such is nature!" pursued the Doctor; "hiding in her breast instincts so wondrous, secrets so precious, as the earth buries in her depths gold and silver and gems. But I have yet more to reveal, compared with which this is trifling. At my bidding, this girl is riveted where she stands; but on a gesture from me, her chain will be loosed, and she will attend my steps wherever I lead."

Suddenly the lights were lowered, leaving the stage in shadow; and the Doctor, advancing to the front, beckoned with his finger to the clairvoyante, when she slowly descended from her pedestal, and followed him round the stage. The effect was thrilling, and a profound silence indicated the impression it created.

Pausing in the middle of the platform, the Doctor, by his uplifted finger, simultaneously arrested the *somnambule*.

"These are the physical developments of the science," he observed, turning to the audience, "and are strange and inscrutable; but its moral results are still more marvellous. In the one, we see nature in her mantle of flesh; in the other, we behold her naked spirit, perfectly unshackled. Nothing is now masked from her perception, or withheld from her grasp; and she acquires in a moment the wisdom of ages. Things hidden, and things known, the past, the present, and the future, all stand bare to her view; and the clairvoyante, while she still sleeps, will, under this influence, answer any question I put to her with the utmost facility."

He stamped his foot, and the lights were again raised, for the first time bringing out the features of the young girl, as she stood motionless in the centre of the stage. Instantly there was a loud cry from the other end of the room, and a man broke through the crowd, and made his way to the front. In his pale attenuated face, covered with hair, and generally altered appearance, it was difficult

to recognise Algernon Brookman; but at that moment Amy knew no one.

"Amy, dear Amy!" he cried, wildly. But she made no response to his salutation. "What, not a word, not a look for your father, who has sought for you night and day." And he turned fiercely on the Doctor, exclaiming, "What have you done to her? What does this jugglery mean?"

"If you will retire to your seat, my friend," replied the Doctor, alarmed at the incident, and the growing uproar it excited, "I shall be happy to give you every explanation when I've finished my lecture."

"Keep your explanations, and give me my daughter," returned Brookman. "Have you bewitched her, or what? Ah! Harold," he continued, as a young man sprang on to the stage, "well met! You see what poor Amy has come to."

"I didn't recognise her till this moment," replied Harold; "and in her present state she is unable to recognise us." And he added to the Doctor—"You must terminate your exhibition, sir, and surrender the young lady to her father."

"Her father!" said the Doctor. "What proof is there of this?"

"You ask for proof!" cried Brookman, furiously.

"It is here, if needed," said Harold, "since I can swear you are what you represent, and Mr. Smart, who is in the room, will corroborate my testimony. But let us proceed gently." And lowering his voice, he added, "Doctor, you will be unwise to protract a scene which can have only one termination, while, by bringing it to a close, you may yet conclude your lecture with *éclât*."

"Without my illustrations!" said the Doctor.

"Not so," returned Harold, with difficulty holding

back Brookman. "You have talked to us of nature, and shown us her mysteries. Now break the trance of your disciple; and in the meeting with her father, you will exhibit her in the force of her affections."

"A beautiful idea!" said the Doctor, glad of an opening for escape. And fixing his eyes on Amy, he made some passes with his hand, when the form of the young girl seemed gradually to dilate, she looked round with a bewildered gaze, and uttering a sharp cry, made one bound to her father. Brookman's first impulse, when he had caught her in his arms, was to gain the street, and a door at the back of the platform afforded him a ready outlet.

"Come with me," said Harold, who had closely followed, "and we can place Amy where she will receive every care."

His lodging was close at hand, and they soon found themselves in a comfortable sitting-room.

Amy never spoke till she was deposited on the couch; then, as if assured of safety, she uttered an exclamation of joy, holding out her hand to Harold with a smile so touching, and so sad, that he could not meet it unmoved.

"There's been foul play here, Amy," said Brookman, scanning her face with parental anxiety; "but we'll have redress, if the poor can indeed obtain redress in England,"

At these words Amy seemed to shake off her languor, and become collected.

"Do not say that, father," she murmured, "or I shall fear you may do something that will separate us again, and that would be more than I could bear."

"Have no apprehension of that kind, Amy," said Harold. "A great wrong has been done, and your father will find the law is strong enough to punish the offenders without his avenging himself. But you must first tell us how all this happened."

"Yes," said Amy; "but there have been so many ıings—such a whirl!" and she put her hand to her fore-ead with an expression of pain—"and now it is over I hould wish to forget it all, if I could."

"My poor Amy!" said her father, mournfully.

"You'll do nothing against the law, will you?" pleaded ımy.

Brookman shook his head.

"To make you quite easy, Amy," said Harold, cheer-ully, "we'll take to our counsel your old acquaintance, .awyer Smart, and I'm sure you'll acknowledge we could ıot have a better guide. One thing you must explain to ıs, how you fell into the hands of Doctor Whiffler."

"I was wandering about the town, when I met Miss Whiffler, and she took me home with her," replied Amy.

"Then you were not kidnapped by these people?" said ıer father.

"Oh, no! they gave me shelter when I had nowhere o go, and always treated me with kindness; but I lived here in such terror—such terror!" and she closed her yes, as if to shut out the unwelcome recollection: "and t is such happiness to be again with you, dear father."

"But who stole you away?" said Brookman, in an ltered voice.

"Ah! that man! that terrible man!" said Amy: "I eem to see him now. He forced me into a carriage, and we galloped over the road all night, when he left me for a noment, and then I slipped out and escaped."

"Say no more now," said Harold, alarmed at her excited manner; "but try and take some rest, and your father and I will sit and watch you, and consider what we should all do."

Again he felt a pang at her sad smile, and placing a chair for Brookman, they sat down apart, and conversed for some time in a low tone.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

SHADOWS.

THE change which Eleanor had noticed in the demeanour of Phœbe at the Mavering ball did not disappear with their return to Gainsford, but rather seemed to grow more settled. Indeed, events had occurred at Mayburn House, during her short absence, which might partly account for her loss of vivacity, though not for her diminished affection; and Eleanor's kind nature readily found an excuse for the little peevishness and sullenness in which she indulged.

For some time there had been a bad feeling between the millowners and their operatives, mainly arising from the political agitation for the Charter, which suggested propositions for increased wages and shorter hours. Mr. Mayburn, believing he had gone to the very verge on these questions, strongly discountenanced the movement, and thus rendered himself extremely unpopular, all the benefits he had conferred on the working-classes being forgotten in this time of excitement. Affairs daily grew worse, till, at length, on his refusing to accede to a peremptory requisition from the operatives, the hands in his employ all struck, and the mill stopped work.

This incident had just occurred, and the excitement was at its height, when Phœbe returned from Mavering. The next morning, Eleanor, determined to show no resentment at her coldness, called at the lodge to make inquiries, and found her alone with Ashleigh.

Eleanor coloured as Phœbe suffered her to take, rather

than proffered her hand, and the cordiality of Ashleigh, which seemed to bring a curl to Phœbe's lip, increased her embarrassment.

"I suppose you've heard this bad news, Miss Staveley, about the workpeople?" said Ashleigh.

"I was told in the town Mr. Mayburn's hands had turned out, and cannot say how much I regret it," replied Eleanor, somewhat coldly, wishing to show she had no design on the Squire. "I'm afraid it will be very annoying to your papa, dear," she added to Phœbe.

"Not at all," answered Phœbe. "He doesn't depend on the workpeople, but they on him; and a kinder master could not be. He has loaded them with benefits and obligations, taken an interest in their improvement in every way, established at the mill a school, a library, and a dispensary, solely for their use, and this is the return they make to him! But I believe it's the same everywhere. There's no such thing as gratitude." And her last words were spoken both with bitterness and emphasis.

"You are too young to adopt such a creed," remarked Ashleigh, "and pardon the commonplace—too fair."

"And I am sure too generous," replied Eleanor, with feeling—for the remark had seemed rather directed at herself; "however you may be provoked at the moment."

"But I am not provoked," returned Phœbe, mollified by Eleanor's manner; "at least not by the thing itself, but because I know what distress the obstinacy of these people will bring on their wives and children."

"That is a kind thought, and worthy of you," replied Eleanor. "If their wives were apprised of your sympathy, they would surely influence them to return to their work."

"Ah, Miss Staveley, you know little of the resolution, to use a polite term, of your sex," remarked the Squire, "and would be surprised to hear what stern stuff these women

are made of. Depend upon it, the men will be ready to give in before they will, and, at the last, will only be kept to their colours by the women."

Another time, Phœbe might have considered this speech a challenge, though she knew, from her own observation, that it was perfectly true; but her old predilection for raillery seemed to have vanished, and she remained grave and serious.

"If they are so wilful," she said, "they must bear the consequences; but still one can't but feel for them, and grieve that such needless misery should be endured."

"Was I not right when I said you were generous?" returned Eleanor. "Only follow the natural instincts of your character, and you can't be otherwise."

And forgetting their little estrangement in the warmth of her esteem, she took leave of Phœbe with her usual affection; and, merely bending to Ashleigh, withdrew.

She was hurt and dejected at her reception, and, remembering all the attention she had experienced from the Mayburns, felt as if the implied reproof of Phœbe, of her want of sensibility and gratitude, had been merited. Yet, on reflection, she could recall no part of her conduct on which it could be grounded. There was, indeed, nothing, but her accidental rencontres with Ashleigh, which, though so wholly unsought, might, in a jealous mind, excite suspicion, and, notwithstanding her explanations, had probably made a deeper impression on Phœbe than at first appeared. This determined her to avoid the Squire whenever there was a possibility of their meeting, and to hold herself aloof when they met; though, with a heart so alive to kindness, she had early been impressed by his frank manners, affable while they were unsophisticated, and hearty without being *brusque*.

As she revolved these thoughts in her mind, passing

lown the lane which led to the mill-village, on her way to he town, she heard a step at her side, and raising her eyes, liscovered Ashleigh.

"You walk fast, Miss Staveley," said the Squire. "I ronder this pretty lane and fine morning do not tempt you o loiter."

"I have several engagements to attend to," replied Eleanor, "and have already overstayed my time at the Lodge."

Both were a little embarrassed, the more so as Eleanor, hough her heart quailed, adhered to her resolution, and rould not unbend. They proceeded a few paces in silence.

"I hope you have recovered from the fatigues of the ball," said the Squire, at length, with some abruptness. 'It seems to have wearied everybody; and, for my part, think none of us have been the same thing since."

"Indeed!" said Eleanor. And her tone bore out his words. But the Squire, gradually overcoming his shyness, rushed on, in his chagrin bringing out all his little store of rural prejudices.

"I'm sure of it," he said, "and it's a natural result of associating with strangers, when one gets among one knows not whom, and becomes infected by the contact. A country gentleman should always set his face against hese jaunts. They divide friends, and break up every circle. A merrymaking in one's own neighbourhood is a lifferent thing, because we all meet on the best terms, letermined to be agreeable to each other. Such gatherings promote good fellowship, as well as festivity, while those held elsewhere often introduce discord."

"Let us hope such will not be the result in this nstance," rejoined Eleanor.

"Then, you think we have all come back as good *friends as we went?*"

"Why should I doubt it?"

"I know not how it may strike you, but, to my mind, we are very much changed. There is Phœbe Mayburn, whom I have known since she was a child, and never saw her that she was not in exuberant spirits, grown as sober and grave as a judge. You must have observed the transformation in her?"

"She certainly appears depressed this morning," said Eleanor, with a half sigh; "but, perhaps, it is natural in her present situation, and will soon wear off."

"I hope the effect will be equally shortlived in others," returned the Squire; and Eleanor felt her face burn, as she became conscious of his gaze.

"Pray pardon my candour, Miss Staveley," he continued, rapidly, as if drawn on by this manifestation; "but I have also observed a change in yourself, if not towards others, towards me. I fear I may be wrong in approaching the subject thus abruptly, but I am a plain man, and only know how to act in a plain, straightforward manner. I see I am unintentionally giving you pain, and will say no more; yet, might I persist, I would fain ask when or in what I had offended you?"

Intent on their conversation, they were not at the moment conscious that they had entered the mill-village, till groups of idlers, hovering round the doors of the different cottages, greeted their appearance with hisses, which so disconcerted Eleanor, that she could make no reply to Ashleigh. Both he and herself were well known to the operatives, and their supposed connection with Mr. Mayburn, the one as a friend, the other as an *employée*, now rendered them obnoxious. All was hushed as the Squire looked round, but his defiant air provoked another outburst, and they had proceeded only a few paces, when *his hat* was struck by a stone, which nearly knocked it off.

Ashleigh, before in no pliant temper, was greatly irritated by this insult; and giving way to the impulse, flew at the man nearest him.

"You threw that stone!" he exclaimed, fiercely.

"You see me, didn't you?" answered the man.

"I see it in your face."

"Why don't you say you see me throw it, and then send me to the crank for a twelvemonth and a day?"

"I'll tell you what I'll do, if another stone is thrown. I'll teach you civility with this whip."

"You'd better do that at once, ha'nt you?" returned the man, pushing himself close against him.

Ashleigh raised the whip, but at this juncture, his uplifted arm was seized by trembling fingers, and he beheld Eleanor. Instantly his self-control returned.

"I beg your pardon, Miss Staveley," he said, and turned away with her, leaving his late adversary in the middle of the road.

They were only about half way through the village, but though no friendly groups were around, the hisses were not renewed, and they passed unmolested.

"You will conceive a worse opinion of me than ever from this occurrence," said Ashleigh, as they emerged from the village: "and, indeed, I know not how to excuse myself; but the same kindness which prompted you to interfere, so opportunely and so gracefully, will, I hope, make allowance for my exasperation."

"I should not have ventured to interpose, had I not known you were exasperated," replied Eleanor; "and I thought you might be sorry afterwards that you had yielded to the feeling."

"Thank you—thank you, both for your indulgent judgment and your friendly interest," said Ashleigh. But *he was not satisfied with* himself, remembering that, if he

had been excited, the poor operative might urge the same plea, and with more justice. This reflection so disturbed him, that he could think of nothing else, and he took leave of Eleanor, intending to go back to the village. But, as he turned away, Eleanor, seeing the direction he was taking, arrested him.

"I'm afraid I shall seem very officious," she said, "but will it not be dangerous to appear among these people again, just at this time?"

As she spoke, she looked so charming, with conflicting emotions blended in her face, and making themselves heard in her soft, sweet, hesitating voice, that had he not known she wished to pursue her way alone, Ashleigh might have found it difficult to tear himself away.

"Don't be alarmed on my account," he said. "I promise you I shall be on my best behaviour."

"That is enough," replied Eleanor. And they separated, Eleanor continuing her way to the town, while Ashleigh walked towards the village.

The man he had threatened was now standing by the door of a cottage, patting the head of a little child; and Ashleigh, as he drew nigh, was struck by the mild, gentle expression of his face. Something whispered in his heart that the poor had feelings as well as the rich, while, from their trials and provocations, they were entitled to more forbearance and consideration. Suddenly the man looked up, and his whole face changed as he beheld the Squire.

"I believe it was you I spoke to just now," said Ashleigh.

"Well?" was the surly answer.

"I've come back to say I'm very sorry for having been so hasty," rejoined the Squire, "and I hope you'll think no more about it."

"Don't mention it, your honour," returned the man,

with instinctive courtesy, and raising his paper cap. "If you was in the wrong, I warn't no better myself, as I ought to have told you it wasn't me throwed the stone."

"I'm very glad to hear it," said the Squire. And with a kindly "good morning," he walked away, leaving his late adversary better satisfied with the reparation of a few cordial words than if it had been tendered in gold.

Eleanor, meanwhile, pursued her way to the town, painfully impressed by the occurrences of the morning. She thought again and again over her conversation with Ashleigh, and she could not conceal from herself, as she recalled his tone and words, that he had cause to complain of her coldness, which he had done nothing to provoke. How could she maintain this deportment, when it evidently gave pain, where, both from feeling and inclination, she would rather manifest esteem? Yet how, on the other hand, could she revert to their old relations, when such a course might wholly alienate Phœbe?

The avocations of the day for the time diverted her from these reflections; but when, as evening drew on, she found herself at liberty, and seated alone in her little parlour, they came back upon her with redoubled force. Harassed and depressed, the close room seemed to add to her disquiet, and, at length, she strolled forth to her old haunt in the churchyard. This was a ramble in which she had not indulged at night since her adventure with the footpad; but, in her present perplexity, that incident was forgotten. The season, indeed, was more advanced, and, though it was growing dusk, there was no danger to apprehend on a path much frequented, while so many people were moving about. Nowhere could she acquire such composure, such fortitude, such consolation. As she looked round on the still graves and mouldering tombs—*as she gazed up at the* venerable church, which preached to

her from this text—her heart took courage from the littleness, the shallowness, the brevity of life, and grew resigned to its trials. Melancholy she remained, but not despondent; and if she began to feel the truth of Hamlet's philosophy, that all is dull, stale, flat, and unprofitable, the strong spirit of youth, the sense of duty, the righteous instincts of faith, struggled with the conviction, and kept it under.

Absorbed by her thoughts, and deluded by the moonlight, which kept up the illusion of day, she forgot how night was speeding on, till the clock of the church broke the prevailing stillness, and told forth nine. Then, with some alarm, she was hastening home, when the path was intercepted by a man, whom she instinctively recognised as Ashleigh. Not for worlds would she encounter him in her present mood, and at a time and place so lonely; yet if she advanced, a meeting was inevitable. To remain stationary would be equally hazardous, since her figure, defined by the moonlight, would be as apparent to him, as his had been to herself, and he was coming directly towards her. She had scarcely time to glide behind a tomb when he approached the spot, and suddenly paused. Could it be that he had seen her? She scarcely dared to breathe, and her throbbing heart seemed ready to burst. Then came a sense of relief. Ashleigh moved away; and, with noiseless steps, she flew to the gate, and reached home unobserved.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

AMY AND ELEANOR.

A DAY of quiet and repose greatly improved Amy; and the next morning, though far from well, she could converse with readiness and composure. Always sedate and thoughtful, this disposition had been confirmed by recent events; but there was, nevertheless, a cheerfulness in her voice and looks, as if the still surface covered a deep current of rejoicing.

By an arrangement with the landlady, room was made in the house for her father, as well as herself; and once more they shared the same roof with Harold. They were now his guests; and though, having lately delivered several lectures, and found the vocation very profitable, Brookman was in no want of money, he willingly consented that they should remain so during their stay in Mavering.

By Harold's advice, he refrained from further conversation with Amy respecting her abduction, till they should be joined by Lawyer Smart, who, after hearing their statement on the previous day, had appointed that morning for a conference. Accordingly, at the hour agreed on, he made his appearance, and the important topic was soon approached.

"I've thought a good deal about this matter," said the lawyer. "It has interested me, not only because of the parties concerned, but because I can't see the object of it. One can understand a young lady might be decoyed away *by evil persons, and, under* such circumstances, need not look

far for a motive; but this case has some peculiar feature which baffle comprehension. The man who carried off o little girl could have been no stranger. He was aware sl was employed in Bond Street, knew exactly the hours sl was engaged there, and came to her with a story about h father, showing some knowledge of the family. Who, the was he? You don't know! But, perhaps, our youn friend can say whether she has ever seen him before."

"Several times," replied Amy.

"Watching you, I suppose?" said Brookman. "Wh didn't you mention this at the time?"

"I never observed him watching; and it's only sinc that night, as I have tried to recall everything that h happened, that it has come into my mind how often I ha seen him, and then I half fancy he attempted to take m once before."

"When was this?" asked the lawyer, calmly, thoug both Brookman and Harold were excited.

"You remember meeting me one night at Kensingto as I was coming home from Nampced House, Harold? said Amy. "You know I told you a man had frightene me?"

"And he was the one we have been speaking of? observed the lawyer.

"It was very dark, and I scarcely saw his face—b sides, I was so terrified; but when I came to be with him f hours, and sat looking at him in the dark, the impressio seized me that he was the same."

"And you'd seen him before that?" pursued Smart.

"Yes, on the night my father was arrested. I couldn rest, knowing he was in Newgate; and when Harold an the servant had gone to bed, I stole out, and went to loo at the outside of the prison."—Brookman put his han caressingly on her head, but did not interrupt her.—"

I stood there I heard steps, and feeling timid, I crept into a doorway, when two men stopped in front of me. This man was one."

"*But there were two,*" said Harold. "That is important, because it shows him acting in concert with another, as he was on the night when you were carried off."

"It certainly appears so," observed the lawyer.

Brookman looked perplexed, but made no remark.

"Did they converse, Amy, and did you hear what they said?" inquired Harold.

"Now you ask me, it flashes on my mind like a dream," replied Amy, changing colour. "Yes, I heard something of what they said, and it was about some one who was to be conveyed away."

All were startled by this disclosure.

"And these are the only times you have seen the man?" said Mr. Smart.

"I'm not quite sure, but I think I saw him once or twice with father, before he was arrested, and I've sometimes wondered whether he was one of the Chartists."

"This throws a new light on the affair," observed Harold, "though it's a sort of *ignis fatuus*, only serving to bewilder."

"On the contrary," said Mr. Smart, "to my mind, the facts begin to take a sort of form. This man is clearly acting as the agent of another, who has the command of money, and who, for some unknown reason, wishes to dispose quietly, not only of our little girl, but of her father. That appears from their being on the spot, just as he is lodged in prison, when they immediately concert how they are to lay hands on *her*. Two men, undoubtedly the same, afterwards meet at a lonely place, when she has fallen *into their power;* and here a carriage is in waiting,

in which she is driven off. But we now trace the chain of circumstances further, and find one of these men in company with Brookman before his arrest, no doubt with the view of picking up evidence of his political delinquencies, and then denouncing him to the authorities. This, in my opinion, marks him as our old acquaintance Hawker."

The inference was so natural, and seemed so to rise, as it were, out of the facts, as he successively detailed them, that both Brookman and Harold had formed the same conclusion before he suggested it.

"But if Hawker is the agent, who is the employer?" said Harold.

"Government," answered Brookman, sternly.

"Nonsense!" cried Mr. Smart. "The Government might stretch a point to catch a Chartist, but what concern could it have with his daughter?—and such an innocent little girl as this, too! But I know that's your point, and if I were to talk till to-morrow, I shouldn't convince you of the contrary, but only set you off like a March hare. One thing is plain—our first business is to find out Hawker; then, if he prove to be the man, we must ascertain who are his associates, and by that means we shall come at the bottom of the mystery. I'll do my part; and meanwhile, do you keep a good look-out here, both for yourself and your daughter."

With these words, he rose to depart, smiled kindly at Amy, and shaking hands with Brookman and Harold, bustled off.

His cross-examination had, instead of alarming, soothed Amy; and she took confidence from his shrewdness and judgment—a confidence different, indeed, from that she felt in Harold, but which was still unreserved. She put *trust in* Smart, but on Harold she relied. With him she

had been accustomed to take counsel; she had, as it were, grown up in this habit; and, while her heart glowed with filial devotion, she looked less even to her father than to him in the hour of difficulty and trial.

During their short separation, her mind and person had alike ripened, in a manner truly surprising, preserving in their development the freshness and innocence of childhood, like the tempting fruit of a hothouse, matured before its time. She was now but sixteen; but her affections, her sensibilities, the deep instincts of her being, were all completely aroused. It would seem there are some organisations which, coming suddenly into operation, pour out their feelings in a torrent, as a prodigal his fortune, leaving the source void and exhausted. There are others that live their whole life in a span, becoming, so to speak, old in an hour. Amy partook of both these natures, and all these effects. Now but a folded leaf, she burst into existence in a moment, though her slight form, heaving with sensibility and emotion, so fragile and so delicate, could almost be regarded as an illusion, which a single rub of the world would dissolve and dispel.

Harold, as they had but one sitting-room, was necessarily much with her, doing all his work at home; and the growing dissensions between the millowners and the operatives, which had spread over the entire district, constantly engaged Brookman out of doors, so that they spent nearly the whole of every day together. They did not talk—Harold was too busy; but Amy, in her imagination and spirit, held communion with him nevertheless. She could watch him over his work, as she had done of old; and could behold, not only his face, but his mind—could see the thoughts gleam on his brow, as they flashed from his pen, and then reflect that they would soon stir the *hearts of thousands*, ut, spread where they might,

would leave nowhere an impression that was not kindly and good.

Sometimes Harold was at leisure, and then she could talk to him of his labours and prospects.

"You haven't told me anything about the play you were writing, Harold," she said, as they sat together. "Have you made any progress with it since you came to Mavering?"

"It's now finished," replied Harold; "and I'm very glad you're still interested about it, as I want you to give me your opinion of its merits."

"That won't be worth much, Harold," returned Amy, with a gentle smile.

"It will be to me, Amy, because I have confidence in your candour, as well as your judgment."

His words brought a light to her face, a reflection—but how feeble!—of the feeling, the sympathy, and the kindred intelligence within.

"When will you give me the manuscript?" she asked.

"I'm going with your father to Gainsford to-morrow, and you can read it while we're away."

"I should prefer to read it while you're here, and should like to go with you to Gainsford, partly because I've a dread of being left by myself just yet, and partly—" she hesitated a moment, and then added—"shall I tell you frankly, Harold?—I wish to be near my father."

"You're afraid he may compromise himself in these disputes. But, you know, he is for moral force and passive resistance."

"So he was before, but that didn't save him from a prison."

"Too true. There is danger in meddling with such *things*, even with the best intentions. But come with us, *and watch* him; for if any one can prevail, it will be you."

In accordance with this arrangement, to which Brookman, on his return home, readily acceded, they all proceeded together to Gainsford the next day, Harold visiting the scene of action in his capacity of reporter, Brookman as a delegate from the operatives of Mavering. They took up their quarters at the principal inn; and Amy was left to herself, while her father and Harold went forth on their respective errands.

From what she saw in the town, and the rumours that reached her ears, Amy found she had but too much cause for anxiety, as the strike had become universal, and the excitement extended to all classes. Business was at a standstill, and knots of people stood in the streets conversing with gloomy or sullen looks, while the inn, thriving on the general ruin, was perpetually thronged; committees and customers—if one could be distinguished from the other—flowing to and fro continually. Amy was distracted with the noise, the tumult, her own apprehensions, and her growing suspense. The last, indeed, was becoming intolerable, when she was rejoined by Harold, who, having completed his observations for the day, had hastened to reassure her by his presence.

"You look quite ill, Amy," he said; "and no wonder, being left to yourself all day, shut up in this little room. But put on your bonnet, and come for a walk, and it will divert you from this constant brooding."

Amy was eager to go, and, soon equipping herself, they set out. She leant on Harold's arm, and, in her own innocent way, felt so proud, looking up at his handsome face with eyes beaming pleasure. Often had she walked with him before; but then, short as the interval had been, she was only a child. Now she had come into the heritage of her sex, that depth of susceptibility and tenderness, which is to *some a blessing, to others* a curse. This placed between

the past and present a gulf that could never be re-crossed.

They had gone but a short distance, and Amy's satisfaction was evinced in her serene face, when, at a turn of the street, they came suddenly on Eleanor. The encounter was only momentary; and in the surprise, Harold barely had time to raise his hat before she was gone; but there are times when, interpreting the heart, looks are more expressive than words, and even after Eleanor had passed, those of Harold indicated his admiration and emotion.

"Is that the lady I've heard you say lives in Gainsford, Miss Mayburn, Harold?" inquired Amy, in a low voice.

"No; but one I used to speak to you about, Amy. That is Miss Haughton."

"Indeed," was the scarcely audible reply; and they proceeded for a few minutes in silence.

"Harold," Amy then said abruptly, "you never told me Miss Haughton was living at Gainsford."

"I didn't know it till about an hour ago, when I learnt it accidentally; and, in fact, it's a great secret, Amy. She passes here under another name—Staveley, which, I believe, was the name of her mother."

"How strange!"

"Well, if she were to use her own name, you know, her secret would soon transpire."

"Oh, I don't blame her, if you think she's acting right," said Amy, though in a tone that implied a doubt—for the sex, so delicate in its perceptions, judges more sternly than men of the little derelictions of a sister. But there was a charming ingenuousness and simplicity in Amy that sought no mask, and often her feelings quivered, as it were, in her words, like a pulse, without her knowing it.

"You've seen her to-day before, have you not?" she said.

"Only at a distance," replied Harold. "But what is this?" he exclaimed, picking something from the ground. "Positively a locket!" His cheek flushed as he examined it. "I think it belongs to Miss Haughton," he continued, "for she wears one exactly the same; and, see, here are her initials."

He looked round, but Eleanor had passed out of sight.

"What a pity you didn't observe it before!" said Amy. "You might have overtaken her and restored it."

"It doesn't matter. I'll find out where she lives, and call upon her."

Amy made no reply; and Harold kept on talking about Eleanor in an eager strain, till she proposed they should return home, which was not till they had ascertained where Eleanor resided, and twice passed by the house.

Eleanor reached home without missing her locket. She appeared fagged, and sat for some minutes on the sofa, with a worn, abstracted air. Then she took up a book; but her thoughts, whatever they were, wandered from the page, and she sought not to call them back.

The door opened, and a servant announced Harold.

"I should not have ventured to intrude upon you," he said, as they shook hands, "but I have had the good fortune to pick up something which I think you will claim; and I've lost no time in bringing it to you." And he produced the locket.

Eleanor was affable and friendly, though, from the nature of her situation, she could not divest herself of a little constraint.

"Yes, it is mine," she said; "and I'm so much obliged to you, for it's a souvenir of my dear mother, and I value it highly. I was not aware it was lost, though I should soon have made the discovery. But may I ask if you have come to reside here?"

"*Oh, no! I'm only in* Gainsford for a day or two."

"I'm afraid you'll form a bad opinion of the town from what you see of us now, for I'm sorry to say everything is in confusion."

"It is this has brought me here," replied Harold; "and a sad business it is likely to be, from all I learn."

"Not worse than at present, I hope?"

"I don't know," said Harold, doubtfully. "If neither party will give way—if one is dictatorial, and the other stubborn—what can we look for?"

Eleanor sighed. In such a posture of affairs, reconciliation was indeed hopeless.

"Should I understand, from what you have said, you take any part in the proceedings?" she inquired.

"No, I have simply come as an observer," answered Harold. And he explained his connection with the local newspaper.

"Miss Mayburn told me this," said Eleanor; "and I thought directly it was just the way you'd like to be engaged. Is the employment as agreeable as I imagined?"

"To me, it is, though you mustn't suppose it's all pastime; for occasionally the duties are arduous."

"As your presence in Gainsford proves. You know, I presume, that our friend Miss Mayburn's father is deeply concerned in the agitation. She has told you, of course."

"I know it, but not from Miss Mayburn, not having seen her since she left Mavering. But Mr. Windham has given me a note of introduction to Mr. Mayburn, and I propose to call there to-morrow."

"You'll be sure of a friendly reception; for he is already familiar with your name, and I have heard him speak highly of your writings. All this dissension seems to have flurried Phœbe, and I hope your visit will put her in better spirits. You were excellent friends at Mavering, *were you not?*"

"Very, and we saw a good deal of each other; for the Windhams are my intimate friends, and I'm frequently there. But it is natural all this turmoil should distress her, as it does everybody." He longed to ask about Danvers, but knew not how to approach the subject. "We were all taken by surprise," he said, at length, "by the appearance of Sir Everard Danvers. I've not seen him since."

"Nor I. And do you know I begin to think we judged harshly of Sir Everard? I'm the more inclined to the opinion, because on one point he has proved to me I was in error. Indeed, his whole conduct the other night was so kind that he leaves me nothing to complain of."

Harold's heart fluttered at these words, not only because he feared that Danvers, with his great advantages of wealth and station, his handsome person, and fascinating manners, might become a rival, and one wholly irresistible, but because he dreaded to see Eleanor place confidence in a man he instinctively distrusted. Eleanor saw he was disturbed, without understanding the reason, and, seeking to remove the impression, unconsciously became less reserved. It needs but little sunshine to gladden a lover. Harold rallied in an instant; and for the time, thought no more of Danvers. The restraint that had been upon him, arising from his fear of saying anything to alarm the delicacy of Eleanor, as well as deference for her peculiar situation, gradually disappeared, and he was conversing with unwonted fluency, when suddenly the door flew open, and they were startled by the appearance of Amy, her face void of colour, and bearing other signs of great perturbation.

"Amy!" exclaimed Harold, "What has happened? "What can have brought you here in this plight?"

"*The man—I've* seen him!" replied Amy, in broken

accents. And then, forgetting her first object, she buried her head in her hands as if to hide her tears.

This incident quite bewildered Eleanor, as it did her hostess, who had followed Amy into the room, but now, satisfied she was no intruder, withdrew. But Eleanor could not but ask herself who was this girl, so young, so interesting, so mysterious.

"Pray be calm," she said, in a tone of solicitude. "I don't know what it is distresses you; but Mr. Arkworth, I'm sure, will allow no one to do you any harm."

Amy thrilled at her sweet voice, but did not raise her head.

"You must sit down," pursued Eleanor, taking her unwilling hand, and drawing rather than leading her to the sofa. "You'll be better directly, and then you can tell Mr. Arkworth what has occurred." And she added to Harold, "Shall I leave you together?"

"You're very kind, but it is unnecessary," replied Harold. "We have no secrets. The man you have seen, Amy, is the one who carried you away?"

"Yes," replied Amy. "I was walking along the corridor to my room when I caught sight of him at the end of the passage, and I instantly ran down the stairs, and out of the house. I knew you had gone to Miss Staveley's," and she coloured as she pronounced the assumed name— "and you had shown me where it was, so I came directly here."

"The people at the inn would have protected you," said Harold; "but you did right to come. Did the fellow pursue you?"

"I think not, for I looked behind once, and saw him hurrying across the market-place; but I was afraid to look again."

"*If* he's lurking about the town he may be tracked and

captured. Mr. Smart is at the court-house, and I'll go and consult with him, for I don't know where to seek your father. But what is to be done with you while I'm away?"

"You mustn't leave me—no, no!" cried Amy beseechingly.

"You are too agitated to go," observed Eleanor, "and had better remain here. You won't object to stay with me?"

"With *you?*" said Amy, shrinking.

Eleanor did not observe the gesture.

"Yes," she said. "I'm not so strong a protector as Mr. Arkworth, but assistance will be at hand if we need it; and while you are recovering yourself, he can follow up his inquiries without uneasiness."

"Let it be so, Amy," said Harold.

Amy bent her head, and before she looked up, Harold was gone.

Repairing to the court-house he found Lawyer Smart, as he had expected, immersed in business, but, after a little delay, he obtained a hearing, and briefly explained his errand.

"Hawker in Gainsford!" cried the lawyer; "where? But we must catch him, if possible—cost what it may. I'll set the constable after him; and you and I will take a turn together, and see if we can meet with him."

Leaving Harold a moment he stepped up to Ashleigh, who was sitting on the bench, and from him procured a warrant for Hawker's apprehension. This he placed, together with a description of his person, in the hands of the constable, directing him to proceed on the quest without delay; and he then rejoined Harold.

"Now, we'll have a look round ourselves," he said. "*I think with you he'll linger about the town, since he's*

caught sight of our little friend; and it's just possible we may trap him."

"Perhaps he'll return to the inn," said Harold. "Anyhow we'd better go there first, as we shall probably meet with Brookman, this being about the time he said he'd be back."

"Then, by all means let us go."

Brookman was just mounting the steps as they reached the inn. A few words, recounting what had occurred, made him acquainted with their object.

"And where is Amy now?" he asked, anxiously.

"I've left her with a friend, who will only deliver her to yourself or me," replied Harold: "so we've nothing to think of but our search for this ruffian. Let us separate and proceed in different directions."

The policy of such an arrangement was obvious, and they parted accordingly. Harold, traversing the market-place, looked in at the various public-houses, and made inquiries, but without result, no one having observed a man resembling the description he gave. Once or twice he crossed the constable, who had been equally unsuccessful; and he was beginning to think Hawker had got off, when he was directed to an inn in the outskirt of the town, where such a person had been seen. Just as he reached the spot, he was joined by Brookman and Smart, who had received similar information; and it appeared certain that the bird was now limed.

"We've got him at last," said Smart. "I wish the constable were here; but as we mustn't lose the opportunity, for once I'll aid an unlawful act, and hold him prisoner till he arrives."

Harold and Brookman rushed into the house, almost without knowing what he said.

Hawker had observed their approach from the window.

He knew Brookman was in the town, and, on seeing Amy take flight, concluded she had gone to alarm her father, and that he should be pursued. The appearance of Brookman and Harold, in company with Smart, the man he most dreaded, showed he had no time to lose; and considering that he might be intercepted if he retreated by the passage, he jumped out of a back window into the yard. This was enclosed by a low fence, dividing it from the fields, but such an obstacle was easily surmounted, and once in the open country, escape was secured.

In the interim, Amy, though at first with reluctance, remained, as arranged, with Eleanor.

When she saw Harold had gone, she darted towards the door, as if to follow, but was restrained by her companion.

"You mustn't go," said Eleanor gently, taking her hand. "Mr. Arkworth confided you to my care, and how shall I meet him if I neglect the trust?"

"He will not blame you," replied Amy.

"I must not give him cause to do so."

"There could be no cause where he could see none. But it matters not what becomes of me!"

"It is unkind to say this, when, if I may judge from Mr. Arkworth, your friends are so concerned and solicitous about you."

"Ah, yes! my friends! my dear father—and—and Harold! But I meant as regarded myself and my own feelings. There is something in here—" and she placed her hand on her bosom—"that makes me feel indifferent; and you know there is no medicine for the diseased mind."

"My poor child!"

"That is it! They call me child, and treat me as one; and you, because you are, perhaps, a year or two older—*you do the same.* But I'm not a child—believe me!

Feel my heart—press your hand upon it—how it beats—how it throbs! Is it a child's heart or a woman's?"

"Too much a woman's!" said Eleanor, sadly.

"Then why call me child?"

"I used the word in sympathy, not in reproach. Yet I might say you are too young for such vehemence of feeling, though a woman would be more guarded and more enduring."

"You rebuke me. But endurance is easy to speak of, and hard to practise, as many have found."

Eleanor coloured. "Rebuke would come ill from me, for I have been wanting myself," she said; "but I spoke not as a monitor, but, if you will let me say so, as a friend."

"Friend!" murmured Amy. "Yes, I should like that; and yet—but there is Harold!"

As she spoke there was a knock at the outer door, and they heard Harold's voice below. Springing up the stair, he entered the room.

"He's got off," he said; "but he now knows we're alert, and will scarcely venture in the town again."

He gave a brief account of what had been done, and then proposed, as it was growing dusk, that Amy should take her departure. She announced herself ready; suffered Eleanor, as before, to take her hand; and, replying to her look of sympathy with a wistful gaze, parted from her, after a moment's pause, with a kind adieu.

CHAPTER XXXV.

PHŒBE'S HAT.

HAROLD presented himself at Mayburn House at an early hour, concluding that, in the present situation of affairs, that was the most likely time to meet its proprietor. The family had just finished breakfast, and Mr. and Mrs. Mayburn were on the point of setting out for the house of a neighbour, on business connected with the strike, when a servant brought in Harold's card, together with the introduction from Mr. Windham.

"A friend of yours, Phœbe, I think?" said Mr. Mayburn, tossing the card to his daughter.

Phœbe, who had been sitting very quiet, smiled as she saw the name; and, at the same instant, Harold was ushered in.

His appearance and manner, the best credentials, pleased Mr. Mayburn, who, though not one to affect much warmth, showed he was glad to see him. Mrs. Mayburn was quite friendly, being prepossessed in his favour by Phœbe; and the latter, with the variableness characteristic of feelings rather quick than deep, was inspirited by the arrival of such a visitor. In short, the young man was speedily at home in this little circle.

They chatted for some time of the absorbing topic of the strike, and the object of Harold's visit to Gainsford, in which, as a party concerned, Mr. Mayburn took great interest; and, at length, the visitor rose to depart.

"*You mustn't go till* you have seen our grounds," said

Mr. Mayburn. "They are considered one of the sights of the neighbourhood, and we're rather proud of them. Mrs. Mayburn and myself have engaged to lunch at Claylands, where I am going to talk over my troubles with Mr. Crittenden, while Mrs. M. discusses hers with his wife; but you must promise to spend a day with us before you leave Gainsford. Now, Phœbe, put on your hat, and take Mr. Arkworth over the grounds."

The arrangement was by no means distasteful to Phœbe. Her straw hat, with its flowing ribbons, was soon donned, and very prettily her face came out beneath its bending brim, like sunshine in a glade.

Nothing was seen of the grounds till they had crossed the flower-garden, when a door in the wall admitted them to a walk, which winding round a small shrubbery, brought them in view of the whole.

It was a fine spring morning: the trees, so long naked and bleak, were clothed in their first livery of green, and were alive with birds; the smooth turf was as bright as an emerald; the early flowers flaunted their gay blossoms; and nature, like a youthful beauty, had a charm for every eye.

"This is a perfect little paradise," observed Harold. "You have brought every variety into a comparatively small space, without the appearance of crowding; and I could almost fancy myself in the Happy Valley, walking with a princess of Abyssinia."

"You may intend to be complimentary," replied Phœbe, "but your speech is not very gallant. You forget what was the constant occupation of the inhabitants of the Valley."

"What was that?"

"How they could make their escape."

"It's the last thing I should think of; for even if the

place had no attraction, I should be enchained by the princess, and you know Rasselas wouldn't go without Nekayah; so, to be quite *en règle*, we should fly together."

Phœbe answered with a blithe laugh. "That would not be the *dénouement*, for Rasselas and Nekayah went back to their prison, penitent and disappointed."

"The moral is melancholy," replied Harold, "and, such as we might expect from the great Doctor, whose muse was inspired by the vanity of human wishes. But it's the lesson which sages have always taught, from before the days of Job—which we know to be dictated by experience; and yet, by the provident instincts of nature, all live as if we had no such doom before us."

"And must we, of necessity, all be disappointed?" said Phœbe, with sudden seriousness.

"I don't give the doctrine as my own, and we shall do well to disbelieve it, and act as if no such discovery had been made. In this respect, we shall only be imitating the sages themselves, who spoke thus soberly when youth was past, and they had lost the sense of enjoyment."

"That's a pleasant way to look at it, certainly," returned Phœbe. "After all, there are more things in heaven and earth than were dreamt of in their philosophy."

"If not, we should be miserable indeed; for their wisdom consists only of murmurs, and offers no consolation but endurance. Now, it may be true that in looking for happiness, we are pursuing a shadow, but the chase is exciting, and we're happy till the shadow is reached."

"If it *be* reached!" said Phœbe, eagerly, and with heightened colour. "That would be the happiness for *me—not the chase, but* the object."

"But if the object were worthless—if it were the shadow?"

"That would matter little, if I preserved my delusion. In fact, you see, I'm an unbeliever."

"May you ever remain so," exclaimed Harold, earnestly. "What a charming little lake," he added, as they came out before a sheet of water, surrounding a small islet. "And a cascade too! Here you have every feature."

"And all on a small scale."

"A miniature picture is the prettiest."

"I see you are determined to be agreeable, and I have only to disparage, if I wish you to applaud. But, I declare, here comes Captain Raffles!"

The Captain, whom a sweep of shrubbery had hidden from view, and who was sauntering leisurely along, quickened his pace as he caught sight of Harold.

"I heard you were out here," he observed to Phœbe, as they all met; "and so came round, not liking to go away without seeing you."

"If you had, I should have been very angry, I can tell you," replied Phœbe.

"Would you, though?" said the Captain, looking pleased.

"Captain Raffles doubts the fact," observed Harold, "thinking it impossible you could be angry under any provocation."

"That's just it—*pre*-cisely," remarked the Captain.

"Am I to consider you both as quizzing or flattering?" said Phœbe, with mock gravity; "because if you really wish to make me angry, either will serve the purpose."

"How can you judge us so harshly, when nothing can be further from our thoughts, and I believe a single cloud on your face would overwhelm us both," cried Harold

the Captain at the same time eagerly protesting his innocence.

Phœbe pretended not to hear the apologies, and amused herself with throwing pebbles into the lake. As she stooped to pick up a stone, the breeze, coming with a sudden gust, caught the wide brim of her hat, and blew it into the water, in an instant carrying it beyond reach. She uttered a little scream, terminating in a laugh, as the hat, between wind and current, was borne still further away, and seemed irrecoverably lost.

"There goes the prettiest hat in the world," cried Harold.

"The admiration and envy of all Gainsford," added the Captain.

"Flattering again, Captain Raffles," said Phœbe.

"I assure you it's the case—positively," averred the Captain; "and, in point of fact, I've often been asked who's your hatter."

Phœbe could not resist this speech, uttered with so serious an air; and the Captain, who varied his mood with hers, laughed louder than herself.

"While we are making merry, the hat is sailing away," observed Harold; "and I should like to try and recover it."

"So should I," said the Captain. "By George! I'll cast off the boat, and shove out for it."

The boat, tied to the shore, was easily unmoored: there were no sculls, but the Captain, who had learnt some things in Canada, paddled off with his hands. Meanwhile Harold had not been idle. The hat was borne into the narrow channel between the shore and the island, where two willows, one on either bank, met in an arch in the mid passage, and before the Captain was afloat, Harold threw his arm over the nearest bough, and in a moment was suspended *over the stream.* Phœbe now uttered a real cry, half of

surprise, half of alarm, and the Captain, who was still at some distance, had the mortification to see Harold pick up the hat, and with one effort swing himself to the shore, just shaving the water as he skimmed over it.

Phœbe's eyes sparkled as he stood before her, holding the prize.

"It is not much injured," she said, "which I'm really glad of, as I shall now value it on account of the trouble and risk you've incurred in recovering it."

"That would be extremely gratifying to me," replied Harold, observing the disappointment of the Captain; "but I mustn't take credit which is not my due, as all the trouble fell on Captain Raffles, and risk there was none."

"Much obliged to you, sir," said the Captain; "very handsome of you, very."

"You're always so polite, and so prompt, Captain Raffles, I almost forgot to thank you," remarked Phœbe; "but you mustn't think me ungrateful."

The Captain protested he didn't, and couldn't think anything so outrageous, and Phœbe gossipped on with him for a minute, swinging her hat to and fro by the ribbons as she spoke.

"See what you've dropped," cried Harold—"the little rosette looking as fresh and pretty as ever."

"As you've taken such a fancy to it," replied Phœbe, "you may keep it, if you like."

Harold made a suitable reply, the Captain, meanwhile, humming a tune, and looking in another direction. Suddenly, he remembered he had an appointment in Gainsford; and as Harold also thought it time to take leave, they all sauntered towards the house, where the two gentlemen, without going in, bade Phœbe good morning, and walked *away* together.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

OUT ON STRIKE.

THE strike began to make itself felt, like a plague, in the mill-village. The poor seldom provide for a rainy day, and the few who had accumulated savings saw them rapidly disappear, while others, less prepared for the emergency, with difficulty obtained a morsel of bread, at double the market price. Clothes, furniture, and such little valuables as clocks and watches, the treasures of happier times, found their way to the pawnbroker's or the leaving shop; fuel and food became equally scarce, and to the evils of hunger, cold, and nakedness, the turn-outs had soon to add sickness, which spread through the village like an epidemic.

Brookman was a sorrowing witness of all this distress. On principle he approved of strikes, as a powerful medium of resistance, but one that should be held more in reserve, like a papal interdict, than impaired by common use. The present strike he considered particularly injudicious and ill-timed, but finding it an accomplished fact, and ever siding with the poor against the rich, with the man against the master, all his energies were directed towards bringing it to a satisfactory issue. Though counselling moderation, at the time an unpopular view, he gained a surprising ascendancy over the operatives, the more easily, perhaps, on account of his past reputation, and the devotion he had evinced in the popular cause. But besides that he gave his services for nothing, while the other delegates received a weekly *stipend, there* was an honest candour in his untu-

tored eloquence, an earnestness and sincerity of purpose—sometimes misguided, sometimes obstinate, but always the result of conviction—that made a deep impression on his hearers, though it might be anticipated that, in the presence of so many obstacles, his influence would scarcely serve as an effectual check, if once violent counsels were adopted.

Before attending the daily committee, it was his practice to walk through the village and mark the progressive effects of the strike—as a general, intent on resistance, might inspect a garrison holding out against famine. On all sides he met pale and careworn faces, gaunt figures, and drooping forms, but nearly all were animated by a dogged resolution, springing partly from resentment, and partly from despair; and they who lacked this feeling derived from his calm, determined air, both confidence and courage.

The Committee was composed of shrewd and earnest men, whose superiority marked them out in the class to which they belonged. Enjoying but little leisure and few opportunities, they had yet contrived so to develop their natural parts and to inform their minds, that they might have shamed the intelligence of more imposing assemblies. Brookman, till lately acquainted only with the comparatively unlettered operatives of the metropolis, was surprised by the nature and variety of their attainments, as well as by their fluent, if homely language; and he discovered one to be a mathematician, another a proficient in chemistry, and a third a good classic, while a fourth, who undertook the duties of Secretary, was moderately skilled in composition.

Yet, with all this, the pending question aroused prejudices and predilections, which warped their intelligence and blinded their judgment. Master and man could not be *brought* to see that their interests were identical; and, on

the part of the operatives, a feeling of bitterness, originating in the past as much as the present—a rankling remembrance of bygone injuries, deepened by the hardships they now endured, stirred them up to an obstinate resistance. There were men among them who were interested in fostering this disposition, and of these the most active was Lirtsher, the colleague of Brookman at the Chartist Convention, who was to have been arrested at the same time as himself, but had by some inscrutable means adroitly eluded apprehension, and had just made his appearance at the mill-village as a delegate from a neighbouring town.

The Committee were talking over the points of the dispute, for the hundredth time, when Brookman, fresh from the perambulation of the village, entered the room, and taking his seat in silence, seemed not to heed what was said, till, at length, a reference was made to his opinion.

"The point is immaterial," he replied. "On the abstract question we are all agreed, and what we have to do is to bring the masters to the same conclusion."

"That's it," observed Stephen Glover, the mathematician.

"But that's just what you can't do," cried Lirtsher. "The masters don't wish to be taught, they don't need to be convinced; what they want is to grind you down, to ride over and crush you."

"Very true," remarked Job Freeman, the chemist, while others ejaculated "Hear, hear!"

"We know what they are—tyrants and millocrats!" exclaimed Brookman; "but if they abuse their power over us, it is for us to take that power from them. Why do we stay here talking, when our brethren are famishing, and sickening, and dying around us? Talk won't appease *their hunger, or give them* medicine, or find them clothing

and fuel. Let us have done with talk, then, and be up and doing."

"Now you're speaking out manly," cried Lirtsher; "I knew this was what we must come to."

"What would you counsel to be done, then, friend?" asked Silas Baines, who attended as delegate from Manchester.

"What I've always counselled," answered Lirtsher—"what would strike at the root of the evil, and cut it off for good and all. I have never minced the matter, and I won't now. I go for a general attack on the mills, and breaking up the machinery."

One or two of the Committee shook their heads, while others looked excited, but said nothing.

"This won't be your notion?" said Silas Baines to Brookman. "That ain't what *you* meant?"

"No," was the reply. "I'm not for violence—not at least while we can appeal to moral force."

"Brookman's been under prison discipline, and remembers it," said Lirtsher. But only one of the delegates smiled at the sarcasm.

"This isn't a time for recrimination or egotistic retorts," answered Brookman, sternly; "but if I've been in prison, I remember who set me at liberty. It was working-men, operatives, such as I see perishing around me; and I'm eager to serve them in return."

"May be so," rejoined Lirtsher; "but you're rather too roundabout for me, and I don't understand what you want to be at. You say we should be up and doing, and when it comes to the point, you're for still talking on, and doing nothing."

"That ain't clear yet, friend," observed Silas Baines. "There's something more at the bottom, I doubt."

"Then, what is it?" said Lirtsher. "Out with it, if

it's something to be done, though I've got no faith in moral force—moral humbug, I mean."

These words elicited a laugh, as if the sentiment were shared by others.

"It's a new doctrine," said Brookman, unmoved by this manifestation; "and I don't wonder it's not understood. But think of it a moment. What could you do against their police and soldiers, let alone their cannon, when they mowed you down like grass? If it depends on such a contest, you must submit, because you'd be helpless. But in moral force you have a power stronger than armies; a power scarcely known as yet, but which is daily growing, and which you have now an opportunity of bringing into play."

"And how would you work it?" asked Stephen Glover, adjusting his spectacles, and taking no heed of the contemptuous exclamation of Lirtsher; "for what you say seems to me feasible-like, if we could lay down a plan."

This was an essential Brookman had not forgotten, and setting it forth, he recommended that the turn-outs should all assemble, with their wives and children, and walk through Gainsford in procession, as a silent appeal to public sympathy, and then, fortified by the impression they would undoubtedly produce, send a deputation to the masters to invite a conference on the terms in dispute. The proposal was thought objectionable by some, but was approved by others, and at length, after a warm discussion, it was adopted, and the Committee proceeded to make the necessary arrangements for carrying it out.

The whole project was promulgated through the village, and an hour fixed for the operatives to assemble. At the appointed time, they congregated in front of the committee-room, men and women, lads and girls, all wearing *their working costume*, the only clothing they retained.

The scanty garments of some, indeed, scarcely covered their limbs, affording no protection from the keen east wind of spring, which seemed to throw a blackness over earth and sky, as if all nature had donned a greatcoat. Women stood shivering, with infants in their arms, already stamped with the seal of decay, and just able to utter occasionally a faint cry. Their husbands were ranged by their side, here stern and sullen, there listless or reckless—some wasted by want, some by sickness, but all showing in their meagre appearance unmistakable traces of privation. Next came the young girls, the oldest first, declining to the age of ten; then the lads and boys, looking still more famished, and still more desperate. In truth, it was a pitiable spectacle; and though, among so many, there were faces marked with the hardened lines of sin, and not a few darkened by a scowl, the general expression blended fortitude and resignation, indicating the real spirit of the assemblage.

The procession moved, or, as might be more correctly said, stalked through the village, headed by the Committee, and preceded by two calico banners, one bearing the inscription of "A FAIR DAY'S WAGE FOR A FAIR DAY'S WORK," while the divine precept of "THE LABOURER IS WORTHY OF HIS HIRE" was blazoned on the other. It passed the mill, now presenting a blank and dreary appearance, and defiled before Mr. Mayburn's gate, where, notwithstanding a general engagement to preserve a peaceable demeanour, several of the lads indulged in groans, and two or three broke into a scornful laugh. But, this little outbreak excepted, there was no interruption of the order and decorum enjoined by the Committee, and which all felt to be conducive to their present object.

The good effect of this attitude, indeed, was apparent directly the procession entered Gainsford; for though the

first impression was alarm, confidence was instantly restored, and the few tradesmen who had taken precautions, re-opened their shops. But it was impossible to blink the fact that the town was in the possession of the turn-outs, and completely at their mercy. The mayor, a retired mill-owner, and the magistrates, hurried to the court-house, to consider what steps should be adopted in this crisis for the public safety, and an order was despatched to Captain Raffles to hold himself in readiness, with his little recruiting party, for any emergency that might arise. At the same time it was resolved to enrol a force of special constables, and to issue a caution to the public against unlawful and tumultuous assemblages.

The procession of the turn-outs could not be brought into such a category. As it proceeded through the town it excited a gradually increasing degree of sympathy; and several of the shopkeepers, who depended largely on the industrial class, and found their trade affected by the strike, presented the Committee with provisions for distribution. Many of the bystanders contributed money, and a few of the women and girls, whose half-naked forms touched every heart, received presents of clothing, too soon to be exchanged for the more essential necessary—food.

The relief obtained, indeed, was, when distributed, so small, that it was hardly felt, but the operatives were cheered by the impression they had produced on the public. This proved to be deeper than was at first imagined, and the masters, who had been standing sullenly aloof, found themselves arraigned at the bar of public opinion, and called upon to answer the charge. Accordingly, they issued a manifesto, setting forth their case, and declaring they only desired an equitable adjustment. Moral force had thus achieved a triumph which it required but prudent management to complete. The masters, yielding to a

salutary influence, no longer stood on their rights, but virtually appealed to the public; and a feeling began to spread that the unhappy differences might be arranged. A conference was appointed, to which the turn-outs consented to send a deputation, and it was agreed that the meeting should take place at Mr. Mayburn's mill on the following morning. Soon afterwards, it was announced that the turn-outs would assemble by torchlight, in the evening, to hear the decision of the masters, and it might hence have been inferred that the policy of passive resistance was about to be superseded by intimidation.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

MASTERS AND MEN.

THE masters assembled, as arranged, in Mr. Mayburn's room at the mill. They were greatly irritated by the report of the intended night meeting, and Mr. Mayburn, considering it levelled more directly at himself, was especially provoked. All his kindly feelings for the people he had employed seemed to vanish; he urged on his associates the necessity of maintaining a firm front, and, at his suggestion, they determined on a course of corresponding rigour.

The deputation entered the room with a respectful air, and remained standing, while the masters, as if by a concerted arrangement, continued to talk apart, without recognising their presence. At length they were interrupted by Brookman, whose independent spirit was stung by this

reception, and who, moreover, though anxious for an adjustment, conceived that any hesitation at the present crisis would be regarded as weakness, while it would compromise the dignity of their cause.

"We've come here to learn your decision," he said. "You know what we claim, and what we expect; and if you want to deliberate further, we had better retire, and come to you again by-and-by."

These words were followed by a pause, and all eyes were turned on the speaker: he was instinctively recognised as the Chartist agitator, whose presence in the neighbourhood was well known. His deportment and striking appearance produced an effect, and Mr. Mayburn, who had previously affected unconcern, surveyed him with a glance of interest.

"Our decision is made," he then said. "If you still claim what you have set down here"—and he displayed a paper—"your claim is unjust, and we won't accede to it."

"I told you how it would be," remarked Lirtsher, looking round on his colleagues. "But now you've heard with your ears, and I hope you're satisfied. Let's go."

"Stop," said Brookman. "We've got a duty to perform; and, if we go through with it, we're standing in the presence of a great witness and a mighty power who'll support and uphold us, but who'll denounce us if we betray it." He pointed at the bottom of the table, where Harold, in his capacity of reporter, was silently taking notes. "Our demand is rejected," he added, "and it isn't only to those present I speak, but to the press and the world, when I ask what terms will be conceded us? Let both sides state their case, and, if we can't come to an understanding, the public will judge between us."

"No one has a right to judge between the employer and employed," observed Mr. Mayburn, warmly. "You

yourself have no part or interest in this dispute, and no business to interfere."

"I've a part and interest in everything that pits the weak against the strong," replied Brookman, "and what's their business I make mine. But we haven't met here on that point. The question is, what terms will you offer to close the strike?"

"The terms on which the strike was commenced," said Mr. Mayburn, sternly.

"This from you!" returned Brookman, while murmurs broke from his companions; "you who've been a working man yourself, as they tell me."

"And they tell you truly."

"Then you once worked in the mill yourself!" pursued Brookman; "you married a factory girl, one of your own class; you spent your evenings, I don't doubt, in trying to enlighten your mind; you raised yourself by your own exertions, and got up and up, till you bought your own house, and a proud man you were when you brought your wife into it. There were no strikes in those days—there was no machinery then. But now, when iron does the work of men's hands and sinews, and takes the bread out of men's mouths, now it's different. And is it you who'll try to degrade the working man?"

"No," said Mr. Mayburn, slowly, his voice trembling with suppressed feeling. "I've been what you say; I've done what you mention; and, for this reason, I've made the working-man's cause my own. They can't deny it. But while I'll do nothing to degrade them, I won't permit them to degrade me. We are all agreed here what to do. We give them till to-morrow to return to their work; and if they refuse—"

"What then?" asked Brookman, as he suddenly paused.

"Then," said Mr. Mayburn, "we'll shut the mills against them, and bring down hands from another district."

Lirtsher was breaking into an exclamation, when he was interrupted by Brookman.

"We appeal to Cæsar—to the press!" he said, with a gesture at Harold. "Our errand is done."

And he led the way from the room.

Although it was arranged that the result of the interview should not be made known till the turn-outs assembled at night, it soon leaked out, and great was the excitement it produced. The odium, whether justly or not, was all cast on Mr. Mayburn, who had been the spokesman, and was supposed to be the chief counsellor of the masters; and his threat of bringing in operatives from another district—a class contemptuously designated "knob-sticks"—strengthened the bad feeling with which he was regarded, at the same time invoking defiance. Malignant spirits were not wanting to heighten the disaffection; and Lirtsher, moving from house to house, sowed his seed in a fruitful soil.

Brookman saw the end to which things were tending, and determined, by every means in his power, to try and stem the torrent. He quitted the committee-room with a heavy heart, brooding over the fatality which always beset the popular cause, owing, as it seemed to him, to the multitude of counsellors, who far from verified the adage of the ancient sage. The huge body was without a head; and the republican involuntarily did homage to the necessity of monarchy.

"Are you all alone, Amy?" he said, on entering the humble lodging to which they had removed from the inn.

"Yes, father," replied Amy, in a low voice. And she added in the same tone, "Will you have your dinner *now?*"

"We'll have it together, Amy."

The frugal meal was soon produced, and they sat down, the father, as he ate, covertly watching his daughter, as if suddenly struck by her altered appearance. Amy's little burst of vehemence in her interview with Eleanor, when feelings long pent found emission and utterance, had left her feeble frame exhausted, and awakened reflections that tamed her heart. Body and soul had mentally contended, and after a momentary check, the nobler nature had triumphed. But the victory, if it elevated the one, paralysed the other. The enervated form, the hectic cheek, the eye too radiant, were, indeed, such stealthy effects, that they passed unnoticed; and it was only now that they burst for the first time on Brookman. In a moment the distractions of the morning were forgotten, and the agitator and patriot merged in the father.

Their repast finished, Brookman leant his head on his hand, absorbed by this new anxiety, his eye wandering occasionally to the window, where Amy sat at work.

"Come here, Amy," he said, at length. And the young girl mechanically obeyed. "Let me look in your face," he added, turning his arm round her, and drawing her near.

She looked up, and a bright flush flew to her cheek. But the father's eye, though it noted, could not interpret the sign.

"You're growing very like your mother—too like!" he remarked.

"*Too* like!" murmured Amy.

"Yes, too thin and delicate. She was but a few years older than you when she died; and as I look at you, she rises before me so plain, I could almost speak to her. And I would speak, only the impression would vanish."

"I wish I could see it—I wish I could remember her;

but when I try to call up her image, as I do continually, she always comes before me in a form of light, all so beautiful, but not like a woman—not like a poor human being."

"You see her as she is now," said Brookman, with a glance upward.

"Then it would be a gain to die, if we could be the same."

"When our course is run, it will. But we've our duty to do on earth yet—our duty to each other and our fellow-creatures. You know we're told man shouldn't live for himself alone. I should have been all the richer if I hadn't tried to make this my rule; but perhaps not so satisfied—not so tranquil here." And he placed his hand on his breast.

"Yet riches are to be desired," said Amy, almost regretfully.

"Yes, because they give power—power to do good, and to befriend the unfortunate."

"And they give content."

"Content, no! They give luxury, ease, and frivolous pleasures, but not content. There is no content in ministering perpetually to self. That is to live as if there were no world but this, with its inequalities, its wrongs, and its crimes—all the scandals of human frailty. No, no, rather be poor, Amy, than be hardened and corrupted by wealth; rather be the wretched milliner struggling for a crust, yet keeping your heart open to sympathy and pity!"

"I would not forget the poor—I could not; and I believe, as you say, there is no satisfaction in selfish pleasures. Yet, sometimes, father, I wish I were rich; and I think what I'd do if I were an heiress. If you were *rich you would be great* and powerful. And what might

not Harold be if he had wealth? But now his talents are lost!"

"They'll come out by and by," said Brookman, smiling, though mournfully; "and if not, what matter, so long as they yield him bread and secure him employ? Work is the great object of man—work, work! Honour, fame, rank, even crowns and sceptres are a waking dream, the baubles of an hour, often purchased at the price of eternity. The true riches are a clear conscience and a loving heart."

"You think life can offer us nothing pleasant—nothing but duty!"

"Duty is pleasant, and all its paths are peace. Then there are the fields, the woods, the stars—all the works of God, which you so love, and have always talked of with pleasure. We live amongst them now. We'll walk through the fields together, from town to town, and along the green lanes—where you'll see the bushes covered with blossoms, and everything will be bright and cheerful! This will be pleasant, Amy! You must be cheerful yourself, and then we'll learn to care little for riches."

"I do care little," said Amy, taking his large hand, and pressing it in both her own. "It was only what you said— a waking dream!"

They talked on for some time, and Brookman found comfort, as well as a fond pleasure, in the conversation. As evening drew on, they were joined by Harold, who, after the business of the morning, had driven over to Mavering with his report, and had only just returned.

"I see the mayor has put out a placard, cautioning the inhabitants not to attend the meeting to-night," he said, "and declaring it illegal."

"Illegal to meet and denounce wrong!" exclaimed Brookman. "Then it must be illegal for the masters to meet

and perpetrate wrong. See how these people try to exasperate us—to show the working man he has no resource, and can obtain no redress!"

"It's very unwise to create such an impression at this moment, particularly as I believe the meeting to be perfectly legal, though, no doubt, it would be better avoided."

"Perhaps so, but a pressure must be applied some time or other."

"Then, the time had not arrived. You had just raised a most favourable feeling in the town; but by assuming a menacing attitude—by avowing an intention to meet after dark—you occasion alarm, and the public mind is turned against you."

"I knew it would be," said Brookman; "and I told them so. But Lirtsher carried the point."

"Against your counsel?"

"Wholly against it. You should know my principles!"

"Yes, and they'll be outraged by this meeting, which will certainly end in violence. I've been mingling with the turn-outs, and I find them in a state of ferment; so I hope you'll keep away. Why should you attend a demonstration, held against your advice, and in opposition to your judgment?"

"Right, right, Harold!" cried Amy; and putting her arm round her father's neck, she added,—"Pray, don't go! Let them not throw you again in a prison."

"There's no danger, Amy," he replied, smiling as he returned her caress; "though if there were, I wouldn't shrink from it. I don't apprehend any outbreak, but should there be one, and I not present to exhort and calm the people, I should blame myself for ever. It's true I *strongly opposed the meeting*; but because the council of

war overruled my opinion, shall I absent myself from the battle?"

"Then let me go with you," urged Amy.

"Psha!" returned Brookman, playfully pushing her away.

"You don't know the torture I shall feel here, father; how I shall sit trembling in suspense, every moment dreading to learn you are lost," pleaded Amy. "Oh, let me go, dear father! I will keep close by your side, and then I shall know you are safe; and if there is no danger for you, there can be none for me."

Harold was about to dissuade her from this step, being still apprehensive of a tumult; but Amy, as if divining his thoughts, met him with such an appealing look, that he remained silent.

"Well, well, you may come with us," said Brookman. "It will do you less harm than moping here alone."

And in a short time they all set out together.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

DISQUIETUDE.

MR. MAYBURN returned home from the mill, after the meeting of the masters, in a stern, inflexible mood, as if he had made up his mind to a course to which he was naturally averse. And this, in truth, was the case. He was not a hard man; and he had deferred the reduction of the mill-people's wages, by which the strike had been caused, as long as prudence allowed; but from ill-blood rising on both sides,

it had ultimately been carried out in an arbitrary manner. In his exasperation at what he deemed the ingratitude of the operatives, he did not remember his own want of forbearance—a failing too common with the rich; but the remarks of Brookman, recalling his past life, had touched and softened him, and he pondered whether he could recede from the position he had taken up. The more he had thought, the more he was satisfied with the necessity of his decision, and considered himself pledged to abide by it.

As he reached the avenue to the house, he overtook Eleanor, on her way to give Phœbe her music-lesson. With the instinct peculiar to those who have mixed much with the humbler classes, he had, from the first, recognised in Eleanor something superior—a style and polish only acquired by frequent intercourse with refined society: and, in consequence, there was so much delicacy in the consideration he showed her, that he had won her esteem; while, on the other hand, she had become one of his special favourites. They now entered the house together, and the millowner seemed so pleased with his companion, that Mrs. Mayburn insisted on her remaining the rest of the day; and as she would hear of no excuse, Eleanor was obliged to yield.

Phœbe, whatever had caused the change, was as friendly, if not as cordial, as her parents; and, by many little attentions, endeavoured to efface the remembrance of her late reserve. But with all this, at moments there was still something of constraint about her, scarcely consistent with her old affection, though Eleanor, unconscious of any provocation, did not observe or suspect it.

At first, she was full of the strike and the turn-outs.

"Did you see their procession through Gainsford?" she asked, as she and Eleanor sat by themselves in the music-room.

Eleanor replied in the affirmative.

"And what did you think of it?"

"It was very sad."

"Yes, they are enduring much, no doubt; and, what is worse, the well-disposed suffer with the mutinous. They say our own people would return to work, if left alone; but some are overawed, and others are deluded and misled by strangers. Strangers always create dissensions, don't you think so?"

"It would not become me to say that, seeing I am a stranger here myself," replied Eleanor, smiling. "But I think their interference must have a bad effect in a case of this sort, between man and master, which is like a matrimonial quarrel, and can best be settled by the parties themselves."

"That's precisely the thing. But what can be expected from the counsellor they've called in, a Chartist agitator, who has already been in prison for sedition? You've heard all about him, I dare say?"

"I heard there was such a person, but not his name."

"His name's Brookman."

"Brookman!"

"Yes. Do you know anything of him?"

"I seem to have heard of him before. Ah! now I remember! He was a clerk in—"

She stopped abruptly, and a blush suffused her cheek, as she reflected that her words would divulge her own incognito.

"*Where* was he a clerk?" said Phœbe, looking her steadily in the face.

"At a bank in London," replied Eleanor, rallying.

"What a mystery you are, Eleanor!" returned Phœbe. "You call yourself a stranger here, yet are acquainted with everybody, from the county member to the Chartist.

agitator. I declare it makes one quite curious to know whom you are yourself."

"Does not every one know?" said Eleanor, laughing, though again somewhat confused.

"We all feel assured you're not what you profess to be, simply a teacher of music, or at least that you have adopted the calling very recently."

"I don't profess to be an old practitioner; but is that any reason why I should be considered an impostor?"

"Ample reason in a country town, particularly when every fresh arrival, great and small, seems to be in your confidence. For my part, I set you down as a princess in disguise, and expect to see you go off some day in a coach and four."

"It will be the Mavering stage then," said Eleanor, with sprightliness; "for I believe that is now the only coach and four in existence. But I see you are tired of your music. Shall we go to your mamma?"

Phœbe assented, and they proceeded to the sitting-room, where Mrs. Mayburn, who was a notable housewife, was immersed in business.

"There, I've done now," she said, as they came in; "and only just in time; for Sir Everard Danvers is closeted with Mr. Mayburn, and is going to stay luncheon."

This intelligence rather startled the two girls, and they were meditating a retreat; but before they could effect that object, Mr. Mayburn and the baronet entered the room.

Danvers, as usual, was animated and brilliant, and, with characteristic address, laid himself out to please. He made light of the prevailing troubles; but having accidentally come to Gainsford, had thought it his duty, as deputy-lieutenant of the county, to have a conference with Mr. *Mayburn, and, as a precaution,* had ordered out the yeo-

manry. After so much said on this disagreeable topic, he gave the conversation a more general tone, and seemed to address himself equally to all, yet, at luncheon, he contrived to say a few words apart to Eleanor.

"I'm sure you'll be interested to hear I saw Sir Blundell yesterday," he observed.

"Oh, yes! Pray tell me how he was."

"I never saw him looking better."

"Did you mention to him you had seen me?"

"Certainly not. Can you think I would so abuse your confidence?"

Confidence! Eleanor could hardly suppress an exclamation. Was she, then, making a confidant of a comparative stranger—of Sir Everard Danvers—against her father? For the first time she became alive to the impropriety, if not danger, of her position.

Suddenly addressed by Mr. Mayburn, Danvers did not observe the effect of his words; and, in a short time, he rose to depart. Willingly, indeed, would he have lingered with Eleanor, but he never allowed one design to interfere with another, and at this juncture, his first object was to gain possession of Amy, whom he had tracked to the town, and was watching an opportunity to carry off.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

SMOKE AND FLAME.

Amy walked along between her father and Harold. The town was quiet, and whatever fears of a disturbance had prevailed, they had subsided, and confidence seemed restored. But, passing out on the road, they overtook groups of men and lads proceeding to the mill-village. They did not observe that, as they walked along, they were followed closely by a woman, clad in a manner somewhat superior to the humbler class, though in the obscurity this could not be discerned. The wind blew hoarse and keen over the dark fields, at times bursting through the hedges in a swoop, which almost threw Amy from her feet; but, leaning on her two protectors, she scarcely heeded its violence. Yet, now and then, a cough broke from her, that jarred on her father's ear, and once he bent down to arrange her shawl, and wrap it closer round her delicate frame.

The meeting was to be held in a field, about half a mile beyond the village; and, as they drew near, the company became more numerous, till, at length, the road was thronged. The outlying districts, for miles round, sent their quota to the gathering, and many arrived limping with fatigue, from the distance they had walked. A few links threw a lurid reflection over the mass, showing here and there a streak of haggard faces, while voices, all conversing together, gave forth a dull, muttered sound, like waves *breaking on a distant* shore.

The Committee gathered round a cart, which happened to be on the spot, and was made to serve as a platform. Silas Baines, as delegate from Manchester, the mainstay of the movement, was nominated Chairman; and opened the proceedings by a temperate exposition of the dispute, concluding by a reference to the decision of the masters, which, though before well-known, elicited a burst of yells and groans. The next speaker was Brookman, who, adverting to the critical posture of affairs, appealed to the operatives not to compromise their cause by any excess, which would only strengthen the hands of their enemies, while it weakened their own; but his speech, though eloquent and forcible, fell tamely on an audience craving for excitement, and even panting for action. The agitation had reached that point when its leaders, however popular, could only maintain their ascendency by union, by resisting together every refractory impulse; and, far from being united, they were notoriously at variance. Lirtsher had taken care to make known this fact; and, at the moment, the stump-orator and demagogue, with his vulgar and furious language, was the favourite. His invectives against the masters, his exaggerated view of the wrongs of the men, his imprecations on the so-called "knobsticks," and bitter denunciation of machinery, to which he attributed every evil, stirred up the worst passions of the multitude, and he was repeatedly interrupted by responsive cries, indicating the tempest he had aroused. Other speakers followed in the same strain, till, at last, the mob, by listening to the detail of their grievances, were goaded to madness. There was a general shout of "The mill! the mill!" and the whole concourse swept off at once towards the point indicated.

Harold, pursuing his vocation, had become separated from Brookman and Amy, and now sought to rejoin them;

but in the rush it was impossible, and he was hurried along by the torrent. The same instant tore Amy from her father, and she found herself surrounded by lads and girls, all hurrying eagerly on. After a few ineffectual struggles, she yielded to the general impulse, her heart throbbing with terror, and her ears stunned by the tumultuous outcries. To stop, however, would have been death, as the rushing, frantic multitude must have trampled her under foot. They poured over the road in a dense, solid body, covering its whole breadth, from hedge to hedge, their half-dozen links flaring overhead like fiery banners, while the dust rose above like smoke. And all around was darkness,—the darkness of despair.

They spread over the open ground before the mill; and Amy, as the pressure relaxed, once more thought to free herself, but was still entangled by the throng. She could see nothing, only a wall of heads, disappearing in shadows, and was almost stifled in her living prison. But she felt assured that something terrible was in progress. From the front came a crashing noise, which the mob hailed with cheers, followed by renewed outcries; then there was a pause, and every voice seemed hushed; then a volume of smoke burst out; a ruddy light shot up to the sky; the mill was in flames.

The thing was so sudden, so instantaneous, that the smoke and flame no sooner appeared than the whole building was a heap of fire, seeming to rise from beneath the ground, as from a crater, and spread with volcanic fury. The conflagration shed a bright glare over the country, throwing up every object, and prominently displaying the frenzied mob, which, now pressed back from the front, now pushed on from behind, heaved to and fro like a troubled sea.

With difficulty, and by repeated efforts, Harold extri-

cated himself from its ranks, and fled to alarm Mr. Mayburn. Reaching the lodge, he rushed past the bewildered porter, gained the house, and in a moment was in the mill-owner's presence.

The family group, with Eleanor, their only guest, were in the drawing-room, quite unconscious of what was passing, when they were startled by his appearance, which he explained in a word.

"The mill on fire!" said Mr. Mayburn, with a stern air, while his wife and daughter, differently affected, broke into a passionate cry, and Eleanor's sympathy was indicated by her blanched cheek. "Can they have done this?"

"You may see it from here," replied Harold, drawing back the shutter of a window.

The red light too quickly confirmed his words, earth and sky glowing like a furnace.

"They can burn it down," said Mr. Mayburn; "but they can't rebuild it: *nor will I!*"

"There is a more pressing matter to think of now, sir," urged Harold. "Having committed one outrage, they may proceed to others, and make an attack on the house."

"You are right," replied Mr. Mayburn. "They won't stop there, and we must prepare to receive them." He turned an anxious glance on the three ladies, exclaiming, "I should feel more confident if you were safe in Gainsford."

"If they will accept my services, I will engage to escort them there," cried Harold. "The way is now open, and we can take the short route across the fields, but there's not a moment to spare. I can, at the same time, alarm the magistrates, though they will no doubt be aroused by the fire."

"I am much obliged by your offer," said Mrs. Mayburn,

"and could I resolve to go, would avail myself of your protection; but it is impossible I could leave Mr. Mayburn in his present situation."

"No, no!" cried Phœbe, "we will remain with papa, happen what may."

"And I, too, will remain, if you'll allow me," said Eleanor, earnestly.

"My dear girls, we have no time for a scene," observed Mr. Mayburn, "and therefore I beg you'll get ready at once, and go with Mr. Arkworth. You will give Phœbe a refuge for the night, I'm sure, Miss Staveley. As for Mrs. Mayburn, we have stood together so long, I suppose I must let her stay with me now, and brave the worst."

"And will you send me away?" said Phœbe, reproachfully.

"I've told you what to do, Phœbe," said Mr. Mayburn, in a tone that precluded appeal.

Phœbe, who knew when to rebel and when to obey, no longer hesitated; and in a few moments she and Eleanor were equipped, and hurried away with Harold, parting from Mrs. Mayburn at the door.

The fire was now at its height, and their eyes involuntarily turned towards the blazing pile, which shot up its flames to an incredible altitude.

"Let us watch it a moment," cried Phœbe, as they reached a rise in the adjacent field. "It's a fearful sight, and the last we shall see of the old mill."

"Why look, when it saddens you?" said Eleanor, affectionately pressing her hand.

"That is nothing," returned Phœbe. "I've played in it as a child; I've grown up under its shadow; I've known it as long as I can remember, as long as I've known anything; and to see it now!" And as she spoke her eyes *streamed with tears.*

"Your grief is natural, but we must not linger," said Harold, drawing her away. "Remember, we have to send back aid, if none should be on its way. And hark, those outcries are not raised for nothing."

"Perhaps they're now going to attack the house," cried Phœbe, distractedly. "Oh! let us return! Let me go back to my father!"

"Impossible!" exclaimed Harold. "That would be infringing his commands, besides exposing yourself to needless danger." And he led her on, at the same time taking the hand of Eleanor, who, like himself, did not think, in the excitement of the moment, that such a proceeding was at all strange.

They now heard voices, and—for it was light as day—saw a body of people coming up before them.

"These must be friends, as they're from the town," said Harold. "At all events we'd better go forward, as our worst danger is behind."

They walked on in silence, and as they drew near, recognised the voice of Ashleigh.

"Can it be you?" cried the Squire to Phœbe. "And Miss Staveley, too! What a dreadful affair, after all our precautions and preparations. But where are you going?"

"To take refuge in Gainsford," replied Phœbe—"by papa's wish, not my own. Pray hurry on to him; for they expect an attack on the house."

"We are going to his assistance," said Ashleigh. "But what's this?"

"They are upon us!" exclaimed Harold. "Is there no magistrate here to read the riot act?"

"I am a magistrate," cried Ashleigh, "and will do my duty."

But as the mob rushed up, with yells and outcries, the greater part of the Squire's followers, consisting chiefly of

special constables, ran away, leaving behind only a small body of police, who, with Harold, met the onslaught of the rioters, while Ashleigh pronounced the formula prescribed by law. The attack was so unexpected that Harold barely had time to push Eleanor and Phœbe to the rear, when they were completely surrounded, and a conflict ensued; but after a moment's struggle the mob gave way and the fugitive specials, recovering from their panic, came up to complete their discomfiture. Harold's first thought was for Eleanor and Phœbe; and seeing a gap in the hedge, he ran into the next field, thinking they would probably take that direction. He had gone but a few steps when Phœbe, who was ensconced behind a tree, caught his arm as he passed.

"You are safe!" he exclaimed. "But where is Eleanor —Miss Staveley I mean?"

"She didn't come with me," replied Phœbe. "I thought she was with you."

"What is the matter?" cried Ashleigh, hearing Harold's exclamation.

"We've lost Miss Staveley," said Harold, excitedly. "I must leave you to take care of Miss Mayburn, while I go and search for her." And with another anxious exclamation, he disappeared.

"Where can she have gone?" said Ashleigh. "I'm really alarmed for her, and, at the same time, I know not what to do with you, as I ought to hasten on to the fire with the police."

"Then why do you linger?" replied Phœbe. "Go, go, I entreat."

"And leave you here unprotected!" returned Ashleigh, in a tone of reproach.

"That is nothing. You see Mr. Arkworth thinks I *can take care of myself.*"

"He gave you in charge to me."

"To you, whom duty calls elsewhere—a duty you are neglecting, though at this moment my father may need your aid."

"I hope there is no fear of that. Captain Raffles has gone round by the road with the soldiers, and an express has been despatched for the yeomanry. By this time they must be on the spot."

"And does it become Squire Ashleigh to be absent? Oh! for your own sake be gone! I tell you I am not afraid, and can walk on to Gainsford by myself."

"You're a brave girl—a noble girl," said Ashleigh, with warmth. "I will go, as you bid me; but not without securing you a protector on whose fidelity I can rely."

While these words were rapidly interchanged, Harold, returning to the other field, dived into a hollow, where a cluster of bushes, growing round a pond, might have afforded Eleanor concealment. There, indeed, she had taken refuge, but came forth at his approach.

"How kind of you to seek me!" she said. "I was swept down here, I know not how, while I was looking for Phœbe, and feared to leave my retreat. But Phœbe remained with you, I hope?"

"I have left her with Mr. Ashleigh. Your disappearance distracted me, and I dreaded to hear you had been thrown down, and trampled on. What a relief to find you unhurt!"

He stood still: his heart was full; and while the sounds of the distant tumult rang in the air, and the light of the conflagration glowed on the sky, and flashed over the field, the secret of his love, so long cherished, and so long concealed, rose to his lips. But, in the same instant, *he* remembered, with a pang, that Eleanor, away from her *father's* roof, unfriended, unprotected, confiding in his

ıonour and faith, was, as it were, at his mercy, and the ehement, burning words were unuttered. He gave her is arm, and, as they ascended from the hollow, they en-ountered Phœbe.

"You alone!" exclaimed Harold, observing the field ras deserted.

"Yes," replied Phœbe, mournfully; "Mr. Ashleigh left ıe an attendant, but seeing you were here, I dismissed im."

"Then, we can now pursue our way," said Harold; and as soon as I have placed you in safety, I will return) Mr. Mayburn."

Phœbe was now addressed by Eleanor; but she ɔemed full of thought—as indeed was natural in her resent situation, and the conversation was but feebly ıaintained. Gainsford appeared deserted; not a soul as to be seen; and the streets were dark and silent; ıt as they reached their destination, and Harold was king leave, the stillness was suddenly disturbed, and the ll of musketry broke on the ear.

CHAPTER XL.

THE NIGHT ATTACK.

HILE Mr. Mayburn was preparing to resist an attack, ɜ mob broke through the gate, and into the avenue, or, mbering over the low wall that divided the grounds ɔm the road, streamed across the lawn and shrubbery, *mpling down everything* in their way, and uniting be-

T

fore the house. Amy again tried to extricate herself, but in vain, as the girls around her, to avoid separating, had linked their arms together, and she was wedged in with the rest. Almost crushed by the pressure, scarcely able to draw breath, and sometimes borne quite off her feet, she lost all power of action, while the increased fury of the multitude almost bereft her of reason.

Mr. Mayburn knew from the clamour that the house was surrounded, and the nature of the demonstration was indicated by the crashing glass, as a volley of stones poured against the windows.

"They've made a beginning," he said to his wife. "Where will they end?"

"The fire will bring assistance, if we can keep them off for a time," replied Mrs. Mayburn, calming her agitation.

"I'll go on the balcony, and speak to them," returned the millowner.

"It is useless, and you would be mad to make the attempt. Be assured, most of these people are strangers, who only know you as an adversary, and your appearance would be the signal for a new outrage."

"At least they shall see I'm not afraid of them," said Mr. Mayburn; and drawing back the shutter, he stepped out on the balcony.

There was a burst of yells and groans that might have daunted the boldest, but it died away as Mrs. Mayburn, with a woman's courage, followed her husband out.

Below was a myriad of faces, of men, women, and children, all raised in defiance, or perhaps hate, while the flaming pyramid behind, gleaming through the trees, and spreading its light high overhead, threw a reflection on each. Wherever Mr. Mayburn looked, on the open space, on the wall, on the trees, he met the same spectacle—

the same staring scowling eyes and gaunt figures, forming one impenetrable mass. But he spoke out boldly and sternly.

"You've made a good night's work of it," he cried, pointing at the conflagration. "Is not that enough, or have you come here to finish?"

"We'll finish *you!*" cried a voice. And the yells rose again.

"I forgive you for burning the mill, if it will do you any good," pursued Mr. Mayburn, without heeding the interruption; "but what further violence you commit, you'll have to answer for. I'm inclined to be your friend yet; and I counsel you to go quietly home, and if you've anything to propose, come to me in the morning."

"And what good will that do?" cried a voice, while others exclaimed, "Will you accept the terms?"

"The masters must decide that," replied Mr. Mayburn. "I've no longer the right?"

"No, you want to bring in the knobsticks."

This accusation, which emanated from Lirtsher, revived the frenzy of the rioters; and Mrs. Mayburn, seizing her husband's arm, drew him through the window, under a shower of missiles. Fortunately both escaped unhurt.

"It is now to be seen how long we can hold out," said Mr. Mayburn; "and if they get in, we must make what resistance we can."

The rioters, indeed, had already begun the attack, by making a rush at the door and lower windows, but these were strongly protected, and the defences withstood the shock. At this juncture, the party encountered by Ashleigh, on its way to the mills in the town, came straggling up, and announced the approach of the police, who, urged on by the Squire, made their appearance almost at the *same moment. They* formed, however, but a handful of

men, in comparison with the mob, and the latter were encouraged by their numbers to act with boldness, holding possession of the gates, and assailing the police from the top of the wall and the trees with a volley of stones. Nor, while this conflict was maintained in the rear, did they desist from their assault on the house, till suddenly they found themselves taken in flank by Captain Raffles, who, with his half dozen soldiers, endeavoured to open a passage. But he encountered a stubborn resistance, and being completely hemmed in, the Mayor, who accompanied him as the civil power, gave the order to fire, and the soldiers levelled their muskets, and obeyed the mandate.

For an instant the mob reeled, and the outcries of the men and lads, the shrieks of the women, the fearful push back and pressure forward, as the wall cut off retreat, gave a terrible vividness to the tumult. But the courage of the rioters revived, as, seeing no one hurt, the rumour flew round that the soldiers had fired with blank cartridge, and rallying, they engaged in a desperate contest. The military and police, approaching from different points, twice gained the house, and were twice driven back, overwhelmed, though not overpowered. Harold now reached the spot, and succeeded in joining the Captain.

"If you want to get into the house, I think it can be done from the back," he said. "I've been looking over, and there's a window opening on the flower-garden, which is walled off from the other grounds, and has not been entered. We can easily clamber over from this side."

"Bring us there, and you'll do good service," replied the Captain.

Harold led the way, and with some difficulty they scaled the wall, reached the garden, and forced an entrance by the window, which, being less exposed, was not so effectually secured as the others. Their irruption

created a panic; but advancing into the light, the red coats of the soldiers revealed who they were.

"I heard firing, Captain," said Mr. Mayburn, as they met in the hall. "I hope it wasn't by the military."

"It was only a feint," replied the Captain. "The next volley must be earnest, but God forbid it should come to that."

"God forbid, indeed!" exclaimed Mr. Mayburn.

"The law must be enforced, be the consequences what they may," observed the Mayor, "and I think the time has now come for extreme measures."

"You will leave me a discretionary power, I hope, sir," said the Captain, with that aversion to the last resort which is characteristic of the British officer and soldier.

"For the present," returned the Mayor. "But Sir Everard Danvers will be here directly, with the yeomanry, and then we must act with more decision."

"Now we're in front I will engage to disperse the mob without assistance," said the Captain.

"Do what you think necessary," observed Mr. Mayburn; "and I will be responsible to the authorities—only avoid bloodshed."

Meanwhile, reassured by the succours, Mrs. Mayburn had fallen back to Harold, who, in presence of the military, felt it would be presumptuous to take a prominent part, and consequently stood aloof.

"I'm so glad to see you back," she said, pressing his hand. "Now I feel sure the girls are safe."

"Yes," replied Harold, "I saw them both in the house before I left them."

"It takes a weight off my mind and heart," rejoined the mother. "I don't know what we should have done, *if you hadn't come in* as you did. By this time we should

have been in the hands of the rioters, and perhaps have been murdered."

While she was speaking, the Captain drew open the door, and the yells that broke from the mob, as they caught sight of the party within, seemed to warrant her words. But the soldiers filed out directly, and formed front, with their bayonets fixed and levelled. Before, coming on from the rear, they had driven the throng against the house, where, having no outlet, it had recoiled, and borne them back. But now, as they advanced, the crowd receded, pressing back before the line of steel pointed at their breasts. The effect was frightful. The two gates opening to the road were choked up, the people struggled with one another; and while the air rang with screams and imprecations, stones and mud were flung from behind, in the vain hope of arresting the soldiers. Then there was a tremendous, unyielding, overpowering crush; the crowd swarmed through the gates and over the wall; and the inclosure was cleared.

The police, who had drawn back, now, by the direction of Ashleigh, made a charge on the broken groups, and the confusion was increased by the appearance of the yeomanry, headed by Danvers, which rode in among the fugitives, adding the clank of their sabres and the tramp of their steeds to the previous din, and scattering the rioters in every direction.

Jammed in by the mass, Amy was resistlessly dragged along, almost dead with fear. Her hand was held by a woman, who never relaxed her grasp, but, as the crowd broke away, still kept at her side. It was the same who had followed her on the road, when she was on her way to *the* meeting.

As they moved along, a horseman galloped up, and,

bending as he approached, spoke to the woman, when Amy, catching a glimpse of his face, recognised Sir Everard Danvers.

"Oh, sir! may I claim your protection?" she said agitatedly. "Perhaps you have forgotten me, but you knew me once, when I lived in London."

"I remember you perfectly," answered Danvers; "and shall be only too glad to do you a service." And he added to the woman—"You will find my carriage at the corner there. Put the young lady in and take her home."

"But my father!" cried Amy. "He is here somewhere, or is searching for me, and I can't go without him."

"Leave me to look for him," replied Danvers. "I'll tell him you have gone home, and he will know it was impossible for you to remain."

"If we stay any longer they'll ride over us," said the woman. And she drew Amy away.

"Stop!" cried Danvers, plunging his horse before them; for, as they moved off, his quick eye observed a figure in front which he recognised as Brookman. The Chartist, who was peering anxiously about, regardless of the yeomanry and police, came directly towards him.

"Have you any message for your father, if I should see him?" said Danvers to Amy, at the same time drawing the woman behind, so as to keep the young girl out of sight. "Speak low, as I don't wish to be overheard."

"Only to beg him to come to me, sir, as soon as he can."

Her father was so close at the moment, he could have touched her, and, as she spoke, he looked round. Danvers felt as if his prey were gone. But the woman, adroit as himself, had pressed Amy in against the horse, quite screening her from view. The father passed on, but had *proceeded only a few* paces, when two of the police, by the

direction of Danvers, seized him by the collar, and dragged him off in custody.

"That man may trace her yet," said Danvers to the woman. "There'll be no safety till she's got rid of."

"But how can it be done?" she inquired.

He whispered in her ear.

"I'll get you some," he added, with a smile, which, even in the gloom, looked lurid.

His accomplice said no more, but dragged Amy along to the carriage; the postillion was on the alert, and almost lifted her in; the woman sat down by her side; and the carriage drove rapidly away.

By this time, order was restored at Mayburn House; and Mrs. Mayburn, assured that the riot was quelled, allowed her husband to accompany Harold to the scene of the conflagration. They found the Gainsford engine at work, and that of Mavering arrived soon after, and poured a torrent of water on the flames. By great exertions, they were, at last, got under, but not before the building was completely gutted, and nothing but the bare walls remained.

Harold stayed on the ground till Mr. Mayburn, seeing all was over, returned home, when he took leave of him at the gate, receiving a grateful acknowledgment of his services, and hurried off to Gainsford, full of anxiety for Brookman and Amy. As he passed Eleanor's cottage, he saw a light, showing she was still up, and a pebble thrown against the glass, brought the two girls to the window.

"I've stopped to tell you everything is quiet," he said. "I left all well at Mayburn House; the fire is out; and the ground is occupied by the military and police."

This news dispelled a host of apprehensions, though Phœbe, too excited to rest, would still have asked a *thousand* questions; but he bade them good night, resisting

the temptation to linger with Eleanor while he was uncertain what had become of Amy and her father.

Great was his consternation on discovering that they were yet absent from home. At first, he thought they would speedily appear, as it was now nearly morning; but, after waiting some time, he determined, fatigued as he was, to go in quest of them.

His anxiety increased as, proceeding in the direction of the mill, he found the road deserted, not a single straggler relieving its loneliness. The lark was carolling in the hedges, but his sweet song, so thrilling at that hour, when morning is swathed in darkness, fell on his ear unheeded. He feared not for Brookman; his misgivings were for Amy, who seemed connected with some inscrutable mystery, which had already involved her in so much danger. Cherishing for her all the affection of a brother, he was persuaded that her feelings for him were of a kindred character, and in truth he could not have sought for a sister with more eagerness or devotion.

At length, as he neared the locality of the riot, he encountered the patrol, and, passing on, reached the mill, where the engines were still playing on the smoking ruins. But no one was on the spot but the firemen and a few of the police, from whom, after repeated inquiries, he failed to obtain any information, and, as a last hope, he turned towards the village.

The committee-room, where the popular leaders were most likely to be found, was closed, but there were lights in several of the cottages, and he stopped at the nearest. The door was opened by the man who had come in collision with Ashleigh on the first morning after the strike, and whose present appearance denoted that he had taken some part in the recent proceedings.

Harold's *first inquiry* was for Brookman, assuming that

Amy, who had not been much about with him, was unknown.

"I'm sorry to tell you he's took, sir," replied Job Sawyer—for so the man was named. "I saw the police seize hold on him and drag him off to the lock-up, though he'd no more to do with the consarn than a babe."

"And will you come forward and say this before the magistrates?"

"To be sure I will. Why not?"

"Then meet me at the town-hall at ten o'clock, with what other witnesses you can bring, and you'll secure his acquittal."

"I'll be there, sir, never fear."

"Thank you. And now can you tell me if there was a young lady with Mr. Brookman when he was taken?"

"No; he was quite by his self: that I'm sure of."

Harold was troubled by this intelligence, but having given honest Job a description of Amy, and received a promise that he would search the village, and make inquiries in every direction, he thought it better to proceed himself to the chief constable, and endeavour to effect the liberation of Brookman. Accordingly, he again went back to Gainsford, and applied at the lock-up, but was told that nothing could be done till the prisoner appeared before the magistrates, and with reluctant steps he turned away.

Morning had dawned ere he brought himself to seek repose. Brief as this respite was, however, he rose refreshed, and, after a hasty breakfast, bent his steps to the town-hall.

At the appointed hour the magistrates assembled, and a crowd, composed chiefly of the friends of the prisoners, with some of the leading operatives, surrounded the building. Hearing that Ashleigh and Mr. Mayburn were present, Harold was about to make an appeal for Brook-

man, when he was joined by Job Sawyer, who informed him that the Chartist had been set at liberty, and, while they were talking, Brookman made his appearance.

"Once more you are free!" exclaimed Harold, grasping his hand. "I was just preparing to establish your innocence."

"Thanks," replied Brookman. "But they could allege nothing against me, and I was discharged without examination, after being confined all night. This is what they call justice. But I don't want to talk of myself. Can you tell me anything of Amy? I've been distracted about her."

Harold shook his head.

"What! she is gone again?"

"I'm afraid so. I was in hopes she might have taken refuge in the village, when the disturbance broke out, but this good man has been to every house, and could learn nothing of her."

Brookman clenched his teeth, and seemed struck by despair.

CHAPTER XLI.

PARTING.

After all the excitement of the night, Phœbe, relieved of her apprehensions, though still troubled by other thoughts, soon fell asleep. Not so her companion, whose feelings, less displayed, were deeper, and she long lay awake. From the incidents passing around, Eleanor turned to more distant scenes, and thought of her father, of Rosalie, and of her-

self. As already intimated, the observation made by Danvers, as they sat at luncheon, had startled her delicacy, and alarmed her conscience. She asked herself whether she had really been acting in a becoming manner—whether the step she had taken in leaving home, and throwing herself on the world, could be justified or excused. Admitting the provocation she had received, she could not but conclude, on calm reflection, that, as a daughter and a woman, she was bound to submit, and that no seeming levity or even guilt on the part of Rosalie could acquit her of this obligation. Too late she saw the course pertaining to duty, and trembled, as she looked back, at the gulf she had passed. With tears she recalled her wilfulness, her disobedience, and her indiscretion, and, amidst the liberty of the world, sighed for the safeguard of home. Above all, she thought of her father, so indulgent and affectionate; and, while her prayer rose to Heaven for pardon, she resolved, with deep contrition, to seek it directly from him, and to make his happiness the one aim of her future life.

With the first light she stole out of bed, and made her few preparations for departure. Phœbe, exhausted by her exertions, was still asleep, and Eleanor's eye involuntarily turned on her face, looking so delicately soft, as it pressed, without seeming to indent, her pillow. The bright forehead, the gossamer eyebrow, so faultlessly curved and limned, bridging the full round lid, which veiled the eye, and dropped its long dark lashes like a fringe on the cheek, shaped with nature's utmost cunning, and mingling the rarest tints of white and red; the beautifully-formed nose; the pouting lips, glowing like coral, and which, parted by a breath, just showed the pearly teeth; the dimpled chin, and swelling throat—at once dazzled and charmed. Her luxuriant hair was twined behind her head, exposing the *small*, flexile, exquisitely-cut ear, and throwing one silken

tress on her neck, which, whiter than ivory, seemed to have been turned with a sculptor's chisel. The coverlet enveloped, but did not conceal her form, which threw up its outlines in shadowy relief, marking the contour of every limb, and, as she lay dreaming, she appeared herself a beautiful dream.

As Eleanor paused, as she gazed on this precious casket, and thought of the gem within—of the warm, kindly, impetuous spirit, wayward, but never selfish, a little quick, a little capricious, a little jealous, but ever ready to be propitiated—as she remembered how instantaneously Phœbe had admitted her to her friendship, when she was a stranger and dependent, and what advantage and what protection her intimacy with the Mayburns had secured for her, she could not but regard their separation as a trial and grief. And did she leave Phœbe as happy as when they first met? She sought an answer to the question in her face; but that book, at times so easily read, was now closed, and she could only imprint a kiss on the sealed page. Phœbe instantly awoke.

"Are you up already?" she asked.

"Yes," replied Eleanor, clasping her proffered hand. "I've a long journey before me, and must set out early."

"A journey!"

"Can you be surprised, after your prophecy? It will be accomplished to-day, as I shall leave Gainsford in a coach and four, just as you said."

Phœbe raised herself on the pillow and looked at her. Her mind reverted to the previous night, when she had discovered Eleanor and Harold in the hollow.

"You're going to be married, then?" she said.

Eleanor smiled, though her heart was sad.

"No," she replied. "I told you the coach and four would *be the Mavering stage*, and in that conveyance I

shall proceed to Mavering, and thence to London. In short, dear Phœbe, I'm going back to my home."

"Then, you are really a runaway?"

"Must I own the impeachment, and confess I've been playing truant, and have become penitent?"

"I know not what to make of you, Eleanor, but I do know you've bewitched me, and I can't tear myself from you."

And she flung her arms round Eleanor's neck, and burst into tears.

"Phœbe, this is weak and foolish," said Eleanor, returning her embrace, and speaking in a voice that betrayed her own emotion. "This is not like the belle of Gainsford, who is said to be all smiles and sunshine."

"Ah! those days have gone!" replied Phœbe, with a sigh: "and now I see I've been too volatile."

"You can't say that, when your vivacity has charmed everybody, and wounded no one. Why chide yourself, when all you have to do is to be happy? And I will tell you a secret, though you know it without my telling—there is one you can *make* happy, one who admires and loves you." And she stopped abruptly, as she was about to pronounce the name of Ashleigh.

"It is not me he loves," answered Phœbe, pursuing her own train of thought: "it is yourself."

"I could be angry with you for saying so, if we were not just parting," returned Eleanor. "But don't be deceived, dear Phœbe—don't shut your eyes to what is clear as the day. He loves you, though you may not see it—though he may not even acknowledge it to himself. You have proved a true prophet in my case, and I will venture on a prediction about you—that the day is not distant when you will be Madam Ashleigh."

"Ashleigh!" said Phœbe, coldly. "No, no, you

mistake." But after a pause, she added in an affectionate tone, "But what will you be?"

"I'll tell you what I propose—tell you frankly and unreservedly. I'm going to my father. I've spoken lightly of my having left his roof, but it was no light transgression; it was the act of an undutiful, perhaps a rebellious child; and I devote the future to its expiation."

"But if it was so wrong to leave him, do you know if he will forgive you—will receive you?"

"Oh, yes! that I can be sure of!"

"And we are positively to part—perhaps never to meet again."

"Let us not think that. At least we can correspond, dear Phœbe, and I shall ever think of you with love and regret."

They talked on for some time, proceeding, meanwhile, with their simple toilet, when they descended together to the sitting-room. As they sat at breakfast, the carriage arrived for Phœbe, with a note from Mrs. Mayburn inviting Eleanor to accompany her, and spend the day at Mayburn House. But Phœbe agreed to save Eleanor the embarrassment of explanations, by being the bearer of her adieux; and with many tears and caresses, and many tender regrets, they bade each other farewell.

Soon after Phœbe's departure, Eleanor, too, was on her way home—that home once so happy, but which she was to find—ah! changed indeed!

CHAPTER XLII.

SPECULATION.

THE banking-house of Sir Blundell Haughton, Moneypenny, and Co., pursued its usual even tenor; customers came in and out, and the counters presented, at intervals, little heaps of gold and silver, and of notes quite as precious, and which, as occasion prompted, clerks shovelled to and fro, counted or weighed, as if there were never to be a deluge—an event not to be expected, indeed, in a concern that had existed from the time of Charles the Second, and had proved an ark in a thousand panics.

But with all this appearance of outward stability, the partners' room revealed a little leak—down in the hold, as it were—that indicated decay.

"Your statement has come upon me like a thunderbolt, Mr. Moneypenny," said Sir Blundell Haughton. "How could I suppose you'd allow our finances to fall to such a point, without letting me know?"

"My dear friend, the thing spoke for itself," answered Moneypenny. "You knew what sums were being absorbed by our various speculations, and I didn't wish to trouble you with particulars; nor should I now, only I'm obliged to come to you for money."

"And where am I to get it? You see how we stand"—he laid his finger on the schedule before him—"and that all our assets will hardly cover our liabilities."

"There is the reserve fund in the stocks."

"I include that."

"Yes, but it's so much hard cash which we can make use of to retrieve ourselves. I'm obliged to mention it to you, as the transfer will require our separate signatures."

"Mr. Moneypenny, it shall never have mine, till I'm called upon to pay the money to our creditors."

"But do you see our position?—do you see what demands we have to meet to-morrow, and what are our means? Why, sir, I've kept this house afloat for the last year by paper—solely by paper; and I wouldn't ask you for money if I could go on any longer. Repeal the currency laws, and the word money shall never pass my lips."

"You've done what you'd no right, no authority to do," exclaimed Sir Blundell, warmly; "and I have been deceived—in fact deceived! It was not paper that brought this house through 1825, and through more panics than I have hairs on my head, but gold—gold, Mr. Moneypenny! That gold I left in your charge, and you have spent it—squandered it, recklessly and madly!"

"My dear Sir Blundell, this language from you wounds and crushes me," replied Moneypenny, throwing himself into a chair, and producing a handkerchief, with which he wiped the perspiration from his forehead. "I can face bankruptcy, but I can't face your reproaches. How could I conceive you'd object to paper? For my part, I prefer it. Give me paper—*good* paper, and you may throw the gold to the dogs."

"Where you have thrown our house."

"Psha, my dear friend! You really don't see now how we stand, or what resources we have at our disposal. Since you're so scrupulous about the reserve fund, we'll say no more on that point; for we've actually a mine in our own coffers, if you'll make use of it."

"I can't imagine what you allude to," said Sir Blundell, looking puzzled.

"I was thinking of the securities."

"Securities! you can't mean the securities of our customers, intrusted to our safe keeping?"

Moneypenny shrugged his shoulders. "What are we to do?" he said. "We want money, and on these securities we could raise any amount."

"Mr. Moneypenny, can you seriously propose such a thing?" cried Sir Blundell, rising from his chair, and standing erect. "You have made me a beggar; would you make me a thief—in fact, a thief!"

"It's exaggerating to place it in that light, Sir Blundell —permit me to say, grossly exaggerating. What I propose is merely to place some securities in pawn, and directly this pressure is over, redeem them. In short, we should only be borrowing of our customers. But as you are so scrupulous, I don't wish you to interfere in the business. The securities are in your charge: hand them over to me, and I will be responsible."

"Sir, it is useless to shut our eyes to the truth," replied Sir Blundell, in a deliberate tone. "By the course you suggest, and to which I will apply no harsh name, we may defer, but we cannot avert a crash. This paper shows me we are insolvent, though, as we stand, we can still meet every claim; and I am determined to walk out of this office an honest man. I shall therefore direct the cashier to stop payment." And he moved towards the door.

"For mercy's sake, stop!" exclaimed Moneypenny, detaining him. "What would you do? Wrecked as we are, we haven't come to the pass you suppose, and even if we had, we can't suspend payment while we have a sove-

reign left. I've made a calculation; and I think we've got enough to tide over to-day—perhaps to-morrow; and meanwhile I may procure a supply."

"By what means?"

"From my private resources. I'll go and see about it at once."

"I'll wait your return," said Sir Blundell. And he resumed his seat, bent over the schedule that was lying before him, and soon became absorbed in its maze of figures.

Mr. Moneypenny, after making a step towards the door, suddenly turned back to his desk, as if he had forgotten something, and drew forth a paper, bearing his signature, with a space left above for another. Glancing round at his partner, and seeing him engaged, he took up a pen, and filled in the vacant name,

Blundell Haughton.

Sir Blundell was so intent on the schedule that he did not notice Moneypenny's departure. It was long since he had indulged in such an occupation, but, as he proceeded, he grew interested, and the more as, after a time, he began to discover errors, which, with trifling exceptions, were all in favour of the house. Hours passed by, without bringing back Moneypenny, and Sir Blundell, with his faculties thoroughly aroused, was still poring over the schedule, finally closing his scrutiny by discovering that the firm ought to possess £50,000, over and above the extent of its liabilities. By the time he had come to this conclusion the office had closed; the clerks had all gone; and no one but the house-porter, who slept on the premises, was in

attendance. He therefore gave up Moneypenny for the night, and, entering his carriage, drove home.

Mr. Moneypenny, armed with the forged order, had, on leaving the bank, repaired to the Stock Exchange, where he sold out the stock constituting the reserve-fund of the firm, and was soon on his way to the Bank of England, furnished with a box and a number of little bags, to receive the amount of the check in gold. Such a proceeding might have excited suspicion in ordinary cases, but in the business-partner of a first-rate bank, it was not considered remarkable; and the coin being all packed, two sturdy porters, whom he had brought with him, staggered off with the burden, depositing it safely in a cab. But it was not Mr. Moneypenny's intention that the cabman, if he were afterwards traced, should be able to put any one on his track, and he had engaged two other porters to be in attendance in a neighbouring street, where he alighted, and dismissed the cab, accompanying the porters on foot. Having thus broken the spoor, he hailed another cab, got rid of the porters, and driving hither and thither, on different pretexts, so as to baffle pursuit, finally despatched his box by train to Liverpool, to an address where he had made arrangements for its reception.

It was not without misgivings that he allowed his booty to pass from under his own eye, but he thought such a course, if entailing the risk of loss, was least likely to excite notice, and in case of his being followed, would distract pursuit. At the hour appointed for the next train, he reappeared at the station, dressed in a shabby suit of black, and wearing a false beard and moustaches, with a pair of green spectacles, which effectively masked his features. He had an opportunity of testing the completeness of the disguise; for as he traversed the platform he

ran against Harold, who had just arrived by the in-coming train, and after a hard look at him, passed on. Money-penny took his place in a third-class carriage, and had scarcely seated himself, when the train was in motion.

As he flew along, he congratulated himself on the success of his scheme, so long meditated and planned, reflecting, with serene self-complacency, that it was the result of his own foresight, energy, and decision. But suddenly his eye fell on the electric wires that environed the road, and they communicated a shock to his heart. At this very moment they might be announcing, at his destination, his crime and his flight: they might be summoning the officers of justice to meet him at the terminus, and drag him to prison. But no! he had taken his measures too well. His steps, involved in such a maze, could not easily be tracked; and even if they were, who could penetrate his disguise?

He cheered himself with this reflection, gaining courage at every fresh station, as he still passed unquestioned. At last he was at the terminus: with a throbbing heart, he pushed out of the carriage with the other passengers, feeling safer in the swarm; he emerged from the station; he was in the busy, noisy, teeming street, and once more he breathed freely.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE TEMPTER.

HAVING seen Amy deposited in the carriage, in charge of his emissary, and Brookman dragged off by the police, Danvers considered that his business at Gainsford was finished, and leaving the hostile parties to settle their affairs as they could, he galloped off to the Mavering station, hoping to save the midnight express for London.

He was just in time, and was soon stretched in a first-class carriage, wrapped in his cloak, and reposing as comfortably, after the fatigues of the day, as if his conscience, too, were asleep.

Morning found him in the metropolis, wending his way homeward. He had no doubt that his absence, at a moment so embarrassing, would be felt both by Sir Blundell and Rosalie, and that the latter would be impatient to seek his advice in the trying situation which she now occupied. It occasioned him, therefore, little surprise, on reaching home, to find no less than three notes from Rosalie on his table—the first entreating him to meet her at the Pantheon, as she wished particularly to consult him; the second reproaching him for his non-attendance, and expressing wonder at his neglect; the third, written after she had called at his house, mentioning her disappointment at not finding him at home, seeking no disguise for her wretchedness, and beseeching him, by their old friendship,

to go out to Kensington as soon as he returned to town, and see her at her own house.

The gradually-increasing vehemence of the successive billets typified the distraction of the writer's mind. Her reconciliation with Sir Blundell, after their rencontre at Danvers' house, had scarcely endured for the day; and on one side the demon of jealousy—on the other, resentment, pique, prejudice, and remorse, destroyed confidence and engendered fresh suspicion. Rosalie felt the want of a friend, of a counsellor, almost of a protector. The threatening letters she had received, showing her every movement was watched, kept her in a constant state of nervous alarm, and she knew not where to look for succour. In such a situation, her mother, living under the same roof, would appear her most natural resource; but she was the last to be thought of. At the same time, Rosalie shrank from her husband, and, in solitude, from herself. Such thoughts arose, such wishes, such temptations, embodying all the bright of the past, and seeming to promise so much bliss in the future, that she could not withstand them, and they plunged her into reveries bewildering, endless, bottomless. In this abyss she saw but one image, and that was her first lover—her lover still!

She walked through the stately apartments, resplendent with gilding, and stored on every side with the rarities Sir Blundell so hoarded and so prized. For this cage, for these toys, she had bartered her happiness—sold herself bound hand and foot, and, as a voice whispered in her breast, body and soul. She shuddered as she repeated the words—*body and soul!*

Mechanically she entered the chamber of her mother. Here the closed shutters, masking the noonday without, created a sort of artificial night, though a few rays broke

in, as reason pierces a benighted mind; and now the burs of light from the open door woke Mrs. Addlefield up.

"Rosalie! how you've frightened me!" she exclaime fretfully. "What can you be thinking of, walking abo the house at this hour!—not one o'clock yet, I'm sure!"

"I thought you were up," replied Rosalie, meekly.

"How could you suppose such an unreasonable thing You know, with my delicate organisation, this is the on time at which I can get a little rest. Now you've let i the horrid daylight, which always comes just as one wan to go to sleep; but I believe everything's made for t common people in this world, and the convenience of t upper classes is never consulted."

"I'm sorry I've disturbed you," said Rosalie; "but was going out, and came to see you before I went."

"Well, you needn't go away; as I'm so thorough awake, I may as well get up. You can sit down a minu and I'll ring for Priscille to bring me my chocolate, a make me a little decent."

It was clear, from Mrs. Addlefield's voice—which r from the tumulus of bed-clothes like a croak, and was t only thing that indicated the presence of a human being that she was at the moment in a denuded condition, *sa* teeth, *sans* everything; but all this was remedied by t French maid, who in an incredibly short time supplied t little wants, furnishing her mouth with a complete set pearls, her cheeks with a delicate bloom, and her head w flowing locks, arranged in a manner not too youthful, t exceedingly becoming.

How this transformation was effected it is not c business to say, and indeed it is not likely we co know; but in explanation of these mysteries of the toil it may be set down for a fact, that, as no man is a hero

his valet de chambre, every lady, on the contrary, is a heroine to her maid.

Rosalie had sunk on a fauteuil near the window, and Mrs. Addlefield, when fit to be seen, reclined on an adjacent couch. She raised her eyes listlessly to Rosalie. What love her small heart could spare from herself was bestowed on her daughter; and as the light fell full on her face, she was touched—as much as she could be—by its expression of disquietude and despondency.

"I declare, Rosalie, you look quite miserable, and it gives one the horrors to see you," she said. And recurring to the coldness that she had lately observed between Rosalie and Sir Blundell, she added, "Have you been having a scene with any one?"

Rosalie shook her head.

"You're hipped, then. If you suffer that way, you should take some gentle stimulant to keep up your spirits." And raising a bottle of *eau de Cologne* from the little table at her elbow, she poured its contents into a glass. "Drink this!" she continued, presenting the draught.

Rosalie raised it to her lips, but to a novice, the insidious spirit, so relished by the initiated, offered no seduction, and she returned it untasted to her mother. Mrs. Addlefield drank it off.

"I wonder you don't like it," she said, laying down the glass. "It's so refreshing, and, at the same time, is a superb tonic. But what were you going to tell me?"

"Nothing. I only came to say good morning, as I may not be home till late."

"Where are you going, then?"

"I don't know," replied Rosalie, turning to the window, to hide her rising colour. "Anywhere—I'm glad to be anywhere away from here."

"I don't know what you have to be so discontented about. You're mistress of a splendid establishment, have money without stint, horses, carriages, servants, everything you could desire. Why not be happy, then?"

"These things do not give happiness," replied Rosalie, drooping her head.

"Not if you're without heart, Rosalie—without heart to feel and understand. Nothing can give happiness to people who are selfish. But if you reflected what pains I took to secure you this position—"

"Would you had never secured it!—would you had left me to follow my own inclination, and marry the man I loved!" exclaimed Rosalie, abruptly.

"Well, I'm sure, you'd better snap my head off. But this is gratitude—what I ought to expect, of course!"

"I don't wish to say anything disagreeable, but you provoke me."

"Oh, pray make no apologies. Vent your spleen on me, and then, perhaps, you'll be satisfied. You know, I'm only your mother, whose sole study was always for your good, and to obtain you rank and wealth and influence."

"And misery!" murmured Rosalie.

"That's your own fault. If you chose to be romantic I couldn't prevent it. My duty, as a parent, was to get you well settled, and that I did."

"I should have been equally well settled if you had not interfered."

"You're a dutiful child—very. You throw that up to me, because you think it cuts, but you're mistaken. Even if I had certainly known that Danvers would succeed to the family dignity and estates—a thing at the time perfectly incredible—I should have preferred your present match, not on pecuniary grounds—no, Rosalie! you'll find

nothing mercenary in me, but because Danvers was a man without religion."

"Psha!" said Rosalie, impatiently.

"Yes, you think lightly of religion, of course; and if Dr. Honeyman's sermons, and the beautiful chanting and music which I brought you up to attend every Sunday, have made such a slight impression upon you, no wonder you're out of spirits. But I had another reason for opposing your marriage with Danvers, Rosalie; he didn't love you."

"It's false!" exclaimed Rosalie, starting up, her whole face glowing with resentment.

"You needn't fly into such a tantrum! You've put me on my defence, and you can't be surprised that I speak my mind—that I justify myself from your cruel insinuations. If he loved you, why didn't he persist in marrying you? why did he draw off when I told him he shouldn't touch your fortune?"

"Because he had not the heart, as you had, to consign me to beggary and want—because he did, did love, and you did not," cried Rosalie, in bitter accents. "Not love me, you say! We shall see!"

And she swept from the room.

But the words had sunk deep, and, as Mrs. Addlefield would have said, had *cut*.

Not love her! Never before had she felt, in her inmost heart, how much she loved him, and what an influence he exercised over her. In that paroxysm of passion, heightened by despair, all scruples vanished; and without the safeguard of religion, without any instilled principle, she had nothing to restrain her.

Entering her carriage, she directed the coachman to proceed to the Pantheon, thinking that if he had returned

to town, Danvers would seek her there. That would be a proof that his love was real; that it was eager and earnest, like her own: such importance do we attach to trifles, when they can be turned into omens.

Swiftly as she was borne along, she could hardly support the tedium of the journey. Yet as she progressed, reflections arose that checked and restrained, though they far from calmed her. Self-love came to her aid, and she resolved that Danvers should see by her demeanour that she must still be sought. If he did not present himself where he knew well she was likely to be met, she would return without seeking him.

But Danvers was too subtle, and, at the same time, too well acquainted with her character, and the little weaknesses of the sex, to be absent at such a crisis; and as it did not suit his views to visit Kensington, as her note requested, he loitered about the bazaar till she appeared.

"I have been dying to see you," he said, "and thought I should meet you here; but we mustn't stop in this public place, or we may be noticed. Which way did you come in?"

"From Marlborough Street."

"That is well. We will go out by the other door."

And before Rosalie could reflect, they were in Oxford Street. Danvers handed her into a carriage, and, in her agitation, she did not observe that it was not his own. He had taken the precaution to hire one, so that, if inquiries were made, his servants would be ignorant of their meeting.

Rosalie seemed to collect herself as they drove away.

"Where are you taking me?" she asked, in tremulous accents.

"To Richmond."

"This must not be. I will not, I cannot go!"

And she seized the check-string to stop the carriage, but Danvers caught her hand.

"This hand is mine," he exclaimed, vehemently—"mine by love, mine by right. Never again will I surrender it!"

"Oh, spare me!" cried Rosalie.

"It is I who may plead to be spared," returned Danvers—"spared a life of misery which you have caused, and which you alone can terminate. Ah! Rosalie! away with this foolish hesitation. Believe me, the time has come when we must be united, or part for ever."

Rosalie buried her face in her hands.

"These are weak tears, weak and cruel," said Danvers. "Why will you dim the happiness of this moment by unavailing regrets? Speak to me, Rosalie, if only a word. Say I have not deceived myself; that you accept my love, and return it."

Again he clasped her hand, and she did not withdraw it. The carriage, threading the crowded streets, continued its way, and Rosalie had quitted her home—for ever!

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE SOWN STORM.

On reaching Kensington, at a late hour, after his long sitting at the bank, Sir Blundell Haughton was astounded to find Rosalie absent. From inquiries he learnt that her carriage, after waiting several hours for her appearance, had only just returned; the coachman supposing he must have missed her, and that she had gone home by herself. Mrs. Addlefield was at the opera, whither Sir Blundell followed, and making his way in, found her in Rosalie's box, in company with Danvers.

Both appeared startled at his distracted look.

"My dear Sir Blundell, what can have happened?" cried Danvers, in a tone of sympathy.

"She's gone!"

"Who has gone?"

"Rosalie—Lady Haughton."

Mrs. Addlefield's glass, which had just been ranging the house, dropped from her hand.

"For pity's sake, be explicit!" she exclaimed. "Tell us what you mean!"

"Madam, I thought my words were sufficiently clear," said Sir Blundell, sternly. And the wrath he had so long cherished against Mrs. Addlefield, and so long suppressed, was bursting forth, when the reflection that she was a mother disarmed him.

"This is no place to talk of such affairs," he said, with

an effort at self-control; "and when I say your daughter has disappeared, I tell you all I know." He turned to Danvers, and added—"I must leave here. Will you come with me?"

"Willingly." And they quitted the box.

Sir Blundell staggered as he reached the lobby, and leant back against the wall for support; but his pride, stronger than his strength, came to his succour.

"Have you seen anything of her?" he asked, grasping Danvers's arm.

"Nothing!"

"And do you think she has—has eloped?"

"How can I judge, till I know every particular? Let me hear what you have discovered, and we may then take steps to ascertain the truth."

Sir Blundell's information was soon communicated. As he spoke they continued their progress, and reached the vestibule. Danvers's cabriolet, which waited on him everywhere, was called, and they got in.

Sir Blundell made no inquiry as to where they were going. He could only think of Rosalie, of her disappearance and apparent flight; and he continued to talk on, repeating the same facts again and again, till they reached his companion's house. Danvers had brought him here that he might know, if anything suspicious transpired hereafter, that it was not the retreat of Rosalie. It was with the same view that he had exhibited himself with Mrs. Addlefield at the opera, concluding that Sir Blundell, when he discovered Rosalie's absence, would fly first to her mother, and that if he had any mistrust of himself—which he did not think probable—his presence in public with her would instantly dispel it.

For some time he contented himself with monosyllable replies to Sir Blundell, noting everything he said, and, while he thus took soundings in the depths of his mind, shaped his own course of action. By this time they had reached his house.

"You are sure the servants with the carriage are acting honestly, and have told you the real facts?" he said, as he placed an easy chair for Sir Blundell, and stood erect before him.

"I should say so," replied Sir Blundell. "But what do you think yourself?" he added, his suspicions easily excited.

Danvers assumed a look of perplexity. "I don't know what to think," he said. "Such occurrences make one distrust everybody."

Sir Blundell groaned.

"With your sanction, I will make further inquiries, and try to trace her," continued Danvers. "It will spare you pain, and be a satisfaction to me."

"Oh! thank you, my friend—my kind friend," cried Sir Blundell. "It is just what I would wish: for indeed I shrink from pursuing the investigation myself, as every question I ask deals me a stab."

"The subject is too distressing," returned Danvers. "Yet one point, my dear Sir Blundell, we must approach, and it is the tenderest of all. Who is the companion of her flight? Is there no one you suspect?" And he threw back his coat, displaying his spotless vest.

"No one," replied Sir Blundell; "but that is natural, as the letters I have received all mention that he did not visit my house."

"Ah! I remember. We shall have to work in the dark, then, but he shall not escape. Let us go off directly

to Kensington, and I will pick up what information I can, and then set to work."

The proposal was very acceptable to Sir Blundell; and Danvers, having used him for the purpose he required, was now able to get rid of him, while affecting zeal for his cause. The inquiries he made at Kensington elicited nothing new, and he was soon on his way back to town, leaving Sir Blundell grateful for his kindness and consoled by his co-operation.

But if he had blinded his victim's husband, he had not succeeded in satisfying her mother, and he was surprised, on reaching his house, to find Mrs. Addlefield awaiting him.

He was irritated at the intrusion, as well as its object, which he could not but divine; and as the smiles and compliments with which he had so recently greeted her, while an appearance of friendship was to be preserved, were no longer necessary, he felt that the hour was come when he could triumph over this worldly-minded woman.

"My dear madam, this is an unexpected pleasure, at so *seasonable* an hour," he said, with ironical politeness. "To what am I to attribute it?"

"Can you ask me?" replied Mrs. Addlefield, suppressing her agitation. "I've come to you about Rosalie."

"And why to me? How can I assist you?"

"Do you mean to say—will you have the face to tell me—she is not here?"

"Here?"

"If not here, where?—yes, I say, where? She is my daughter, and I have a right to ask."

"Madam, one would suppose this calamity had turned your brain. Is it to me whom your daughter jilted—to me whom you spurned—that you can address such a question?"

"You are mocking me. Be generous, and forgive what is past—as I do! Believe me, I have wished a thousand times she had been yours, and it may be so yet. You are still unmarried, and Sir Blundell will, of course, get a divorce. Could I have imagined how things would have turned out—"

"Ah! you would then have made her Lady Danvers, instead of Lady Haughton—nay, you are willing to do so still. I'm sure I can't sufficiently thank you for your kind intentions, but I'd rather not take a wife in reversion—*and such a reversion!*"

"Monster!" exclaimed Mrs. Addlefield, for once yielding to the voice of nature—"she is what you have made her!"

"I must beg to disclaim the workmanship, which is entirely your own. It is true, Lady Haughton, since her marriage, sought to renew our acquaintance, and for a time I yielded; but when I reflected more, I discontinued my visits, and saw nothing of her for some time, till she came here the other day, and was followed by yourself, involving me in a very embarrassing situation with Sir Blundell. This is all I know about her, and all I have to say."

And with a formal inclination, he turned to the door, and held it open.

Mrs. Addlefield stepped forward, and, as she passed, fixed her eyes upon him.

"I believe you to be as false as you are base," she said; "but what can be expected from a man who has no religion!"

And with these words, she departed.

CHAPTER XLV.

RETURN.

THAT night Sir Blundell's eyes never closed; yet, in the morning, a wonderful energy seemed to rally and support him, and the more as, by a sudden instinct, he remembered the situation of affairs at the bank, and their urgent claim on his attention. From Moneypenny's confident tone, he hoped that a supply of gold might have been procured, so that the bank, keeping up its credit, would have time to realise its assets, which the mistakes he had discovered in the balance-sheet showed to be more than sufficient. But his hopes fell when, on reaching the City, he found that Moneypenny had not made his appearance; and though messengers were despatched in every direction, no intelligence of him could be obtained. Slowly the truth broke on Sir Blundell, that his partner had absconded.

Evil tidings have wings, and, what is more, tongues, and a rumour ran through the City that all was not right with the doomed firm. In an incredibly short time, the bank was thronged with claimants; the little stock of gold was drained out; and the chief cashier announced, with faltering lips, that Sir Blundell Haughton, Moneypenny, and Co. had stopped payment.

Stopped payment! The great firm that, through good times and evil, had stood like a rock for two centuries—which more than once had excited the jealousy of Thread-

needle Street—which had become a proverb for integrity, probity, and stability: it had stopped payment!

Some hours elapsed before Sir Blundell could leave the bank; but the arrangements requiring his presence, though numerous, were at length completed, and he took his way homeward.

The tidings had arrived before him, no one knew how; and servants, whose vocations lay in other parts of the house, made some errand through the hall, to see how the ruined man would look when he entered. All had an opportunity of making the same observation, as Sir Blundell, almost as he appeared, summoned the whole establishment to the library. In a few words, and in a tone that did not admit of reply, he informed them that their services were no longer required, and, paying each his wages, desired them to leave the house forthwith. But one of the large *entourage* was retained—his valet, who had grown gray in his service, and, perhaps, was the only one beneath his roof who sympathised in his misfortunes.

Till this moment Sir Blundell maintained a cold, inflexible attitude, bearing up under his reverses as if his frame were iron. He was like a strong swimmer cast on a stormy sea, and who, with destruction looking him in the face, fights more resolutely with the waves, the more they rise against him. But no sooner was he relieved from the necessity of action, and able to recur to his own thoughts—to retire into and commune with himself, than his false strength vanished, and the tension to which his mind had been subjected gave way.

For hours he lay prostrate on the gilded couch—prostrate in mind, in body, in fortune. What a relief would he have found in sleep from that bitter, bitter *anguish*! But though he kept his eyes shut—though he

was worn and exhausted—though the great house, with its deserted chambers, was still as the grave, sleep would not come. How could it, when every thought, reflecting some phase of his situation, was a dagger pointed at his heart! Where could he look for sympathy, or for consolation? The roof over his head, the couch on which he lay, were no longer his own! a bankrupt, a beggar! abandoned by his wife, forsaken by his child, he might have exclaimed, with the patriarch of old, that Providence had vexed him with all its storms.

There he lay, unmindful of the passing time, regardless of the growing shadows of evening, seeing only the gloom of his own agony and despair.

But at the moment that he appeared most desolate, his penitent child was at his door. It was with a throbbing heart, but with no foreboding of evil, that Eleanor awaited admittance. At length, the faithful old valet appeared, and it needed but a glance at his face to excite her misgivings.

"Miss Eleanor!" he cried, with an exclamation, blending surprise and satisfaction. But as he spoke, the tears coursed down his cheek.

"What is the matter, Roland?" said Eleanor, agitatedly. "Has anything happened?"

"You have not heard, then, miss?"

"I have heard nothing. Pray tell me what it is?"

It was soon told. As the sad narrative was unfolded, Eleanor stood like a statue, as pale, and almost as lifeless. She was aroused by a step; and Sir Blundell entered the hall.

His eye, abstracted as his mind, turned listlessly upon her, but she rushed forward, and threw herself at his feet.

"My papa!—my dear, dear papa!" was all she could say.

Sir Blundell tried to raise her; but, in her distraction, she clung round him, and he would not push her away.

"It is Eleanor!" he murmured, in a subdued tone.

"Yes, Eleanor!—your wicked, undutiful child!" she replied, her voice broken by sobs. "Oh! dear papa—dear, dear papa—can you forgive me?"

Now he raised her in his arms, looked in her face, and then, as if satisfied with the scrutiny, pressed her to his heart.

"Yes, my Eleanor, I forgive you!" he said, tenderly. And, with a devout look upward, he exclaimed,—"I thank Thee, who givest and takest away, that thou hast left me my child!"

CHAPTER XLVI.

NIGHT PROWLERS.

It is long since we have seen the sweep, who was chased down in Holborn by Lawyer Smart, and, then and there, gave such an information respecting Hawker, that the latter did not think it quite prudent to appear as a witness at Brookman's trial. His physique had undergone no improvement in the interim, but, if possible, had become more emaciated, and more repulsive; and the hard lines of his face seemed to mark him with the brand of Cain, as though, if time and opportunity served, he were ready for any deed of violence.

He was sitting in the garden of a country beer-shop, a haunt for tramps and poachers. Before him was a well-worn deal table, supporting a mug of beer; and facing him, on the other side of the board, was a man of shabby-genteel exterior, who was no other than Hawker himself.

"So this is the very place, is it?" Hawker remarked; "and that's the very church where Parson Hargrave married Lettice Seaford? you're sure of it?"

"Certain," was the curt reply.

"I know you were a favourite of the parson's—such an innocent as you were then, Mike? So he told you this himself, did he?"

"He did."

"After all, he might have been gammonin'."

"He wasn't one of the gammonin' sort."

Hawker put his tongue in his cheek. "Of course, he wasn't," he said. "But it's the general opinion, for all that, that him and Lettice were never regularly spliced; and before I'd believe it, I'd either see their marriage lines or the register."

"I know there was a talk about it, many years ago, long after the lady was dead; and, to prove it wasn't so, the parson showed me the register."

"Ha!" exclaimed Hawker, his face lighting up: "you actually saw it. Then you know where it's kept."

"It's always kept in the same place, in an old chest behind the vestry door."

"You'll make your fortune yet, if you live long enough," said Hawker, slapping him on the shoulder. "Now I'll tell you what, the leaf of the register containing that marriage is wanted—you understand?"

"What for?"

"Well put!—question and answer; but I don't know that I should let you into my secrets, seeing you've peached once before."

"Did I peach on the trial?"

"That you didn't. There's no denyin' you stood staunch then."

"And so I would still, but the lawyer nailed me, and how could I tell he'd bring it against you, after so many years?"

"Well, I ain't goin' to reap it up, but if you ever split on me again, look here!"—and he drew a knife from the breast of his coat—"this will settle it. But if it's to be Partner & Co., say the word, and I am willing."

"Go on," said the sweep.

"Well, this leaf, as I said before, must be prigged. The marriage is disputed; no one knows where it was

solemnised; and if it can be proved, it fixes the succession to an estate, which at present is unclaimed by the rightful owner."

"That's no concern of ours."

Hawker put his finger on his nose. "Leave that to me," he said. "You clip the leaf—that's all."

"I'll not meddle with it—I don't like the job," returned the sweep. "If I'm to be sent over the water again, it shan't be for a trifle, I tell you. I'll have some swag for it."

"You won't do it?"

"No!"

"Only to break into the vestry, and knock the lid off an old box behind the door!—you said it was behind the door, didn't you?"

"It used to be."

"Well, if you won't do it, you won't, and we must give it up. I don't seem to care much about it."

But he avoided the sweep's eye, and, with suspicious courtesy, pushed him over the mug, thus diverting his attention.

"As we're to be off at daylight, I'll just take a look round the village," he said. "You stay here till I come back."

The sweep nodded acquiescence, retaining his place while Hawker sauntered off. There was something in the condition of the wretched man, so sullen and taciturn, that deserved commiseration, if not sympathy. He was not willingly a criminal. With the aid of the *douceur* given him by Smart, he had tried, through many temptations, to obtain an honest livelihood, and was just on the point of succeeding, when he was discovered by the police, and obliged to fly. He had then tramped down to his native

village, hoping that here, remote from the eye of justice, he might meet with some early friend, who would help him to procure employment. But his last hope was disappointed, and he stood in his native place a stranger and an alien.

It was at this juncture he encountered Hawker, who, by seducing him into crime, had been the original cause of his ruin; and now, affording him food and shelter, easily induced him to renew their compact. It was, indeed, his only resource, and he was at last persuaded that his hand must be against every man, since every man's hand was against him. Yet, of the whole human race, he hated Hawker most, and dreaded while he hated. With his old experience, he saw in an instant through his schemes, and understood his objects by instinct. In the present case, a moment's reflection convinced him that Hawker intended to break into the vestry of the church, and possess himself of the coveted leaf of the register, which, once in his power, would, he knew, be used for some purpose of villainy. This would have troubled him little, but the thought that, recording the marriage of Lettice Seaford, it might in some way affect the family of his benefactor, aroused and interested him. He cursed his indiscretion in being so communicative on the subject, though it was owing solely to his grateful feeling towards Parson Hargrave, prompting him to uphold his good name; and he determined, if he possibly could, to be beforehand with Hawker, and extract the leaf himself. True, this would not help the party interested; but it would keep it out of the power of Hawker; and, at some future time, he might be able to place the important record in proper custody.

To ascertain Hawker's designs, it was necessary to follow his steps; for if he intended to break into the church at night, he would, no doubt, as a stranger, seek to examine

it by daylight. Familiar with the locality, the sweep easily made his way to the spot by an unfrequented route, and had barely time to conceal himself behind the sunken wall of the churchyard, when Hawker appeared.

Shuffling about here and there, he watched his opportunity to inspect each window in turn, and finally, after looking carefully round, darted into the porch, where he remained some minutes. On coming out, he walked away, and hence the sweep concluded that it was there he intended to make an entry.

Returning to the beer-shop, Hawker found the sweep sitting in the garden, apparently without having moved, or once emerged from his reverie, since he left him.

"You're pleasant company, I don't think," he said. "Are you goin' to stop out here all night. Come inside, and we'll have a maul with the pasteboards."

The sweep offered no objection, and they went into the tap, where, at a table screened by a partition, three or four adventurers in smock frocks were playing cards. Hawker's proposal to join the party was agreed to; gin, for which the house had no license, was supplied from a jar, kept in a secret cupboard; and, thus provided, the little club continued its diversion, with an occasional interchange of oaths and menaces, till a late hour.

At last the sweep scrambled into the loft which was to serve for his lodging—a hole next the rafters, without door or window, and immediately over the room assigned to Hawker.

He had to wait long before all was quiet. At this moment Hawker began to move, indicating he had no time to lose; and snatching up his traps, comprising a jemmy, a phosphorus match, and the end of a candle, the sweep dropped to the landing below on his naked feet, and noiselessly

descended the stairs. He reached the door, but reflecting that Hawker, on coming to effect his egress, would find it unfastened, and that this would naturally excite his suspicions, he passed on to the tap-window, groping his way through a maze of benches and tables with such precision, that he made not one false step. The shutters withdrawn, he pushed open the window, which was an old-fashioned lattice, and creaked somewhat, but raised no alarm; and just as he leaped forth, his quick ear distinguished a slight sound above, announcing that Hawker was behind.

He paused only to close the lattice, which, by cruelly jamming his fingers, he was able to do without noise. He then bounded across the road, and crept through a gap into a field, proceeding over the ploughed ground direct to the churchyard.

The night was just suited to his errand. Not a star was to be seen: the clouds, completely masking the sky, drooped heavily down, like a funeral pall; and it was dark as pitch.

The sweep was an adept at his craft. He clambered to the top of the porch like a squirrel; and, without an instant's delay, tore off the beading of the fanlight with the sharp end of his jemmy, bringing the whole out in a piece. The aperture, though small, was sufficient to admit his wiry body, and pushing his feet foremost, he let himself down within.

It was long since he had been in a church; then, cast out from its pale, he had attended as a convict, under the stern discipline of a prison; but what a gulf divided him from the time when he last stood here! Feelings came back upon him from that distant period, like fragments of a dream, effacing the remembrance of his present purpose, and keeping him rooted to the spot.

He looked around, straining his eyes in the darkness to catch a glimpse of some familiar object, but nothing could be discerned; and the pews, the gallery, even the antique pulpit, which stood isolated and alone, were all lost in the gloom, like the germs of good in his own soul.

With a muttered exclamation, and fiercely striking his forehead, he turned to the vestry. The same unerring instinct that had guided his steps before, in stealing from his den, brought him to the door, and softly lifting the latch, he entered.

He now ventured to light his candle, keeping it, however, carefully shaded with his hand, lest the reflection should be seen by Hawker, who, having set out at the same time as himself, could not be distant. The old chest still occupied the same dark nook, where it had stood from time immemorial. He raised the lid, ran his eye over the backs of the registries, and drew forth the one he was in search of.

His eye involuntarily paused as, in turning the leaves, he recognised the characters of Mr. Hargrave, his early friend and benefactor; but the pages were quickly scanned, and at length he reached the important entry. He glanced down the lines, and as he discerned the well-remembered names, the page was torn from the book, and secured.

As he restored the registry to its place in the chest, a grating noise without warned him to extinguish the light. It was now apparent that he would meet Hawker entering if he emerged from the vestry. This must be avoided, and his eye ran round the walls, in quest of a covert. Finally he took refuge behind a clerical gown, hanging from a row of pegs, and which completely enveloped him.

The door opened noisily, admitting Hawker, who, at that dead hour, and in that place, had no fear of attracting

unfriendly attention. Yet, as he shot round his lantern, the gown concealing the sweep so resembled a human figure, that his first impulse was to fly; but rallying, and drawing from his vest a naked blade, he advanced a pace or two nearer, his gaze fixed on the object. The least motion of the gown would have brought down a fatal blow; and had the sweep but breathed, that breath would have been his last. But all remaining still, Hawker was satisfied, and turned to his task.

Great was his consternation, on reaching the date of the marriage, to find the leaf cut out. He could hardly believe his eyes; and opened the slide of his lantern, which emitted but a feeble glimmer, to throw the full light on the page. The sweep, meanwhile, approached on tiptoe, holding a large stone, which, as he drew near, he threw against the door. Hawker started at the noise, and the sweep, having thus distracted his attention, blew out the light, leaving the place in darkness.

At first, Hawker stood petrified. Then, under the same superstitious influence, which his shattered nerves could not resist, he rushed out of the vestry and the church, never slacking his steps till he was safe inside the beer-shop.

But, quick as he was, the sweep was home before him; and was snugly ensconced in his den, when he heard Hawker creep up the stairs, and totter into his room.

CHAPTER XLVII.

A FRIEND IN NEED.

HAROLD'S rencontre with Mr. Moneypenny at the railway terminus must have taken the reader, as it did the fugitive banker, by surprise, but it admits of easy explanation. He had that morning received a letter from a London newspaper, offering him an engagement in town; and Mr. Twidger, not wishing to retard his advancement, consented to his going, on his undertaking to send him an article weekly by post. He found it more difficult to part with Brookman, in his affliction at the disappearance of Amy; but after a conference with Lawyer Smart, it was thought he would be very effectively employed in directing a search for Amy in town, while Brookman and the lawyer pursued their inquiries in the country. To the metropolis he accordingly came, and at once entered on his engagement.

He was not long before he heard the momentous news of the day—the failure of the great house of Sir Blundell Haughton, Moneypenny, and Co., which, passing from mouth to mouth, paled men's faces, and startled the isle from its propriety. Instantly he recollected the man he had seen at the railway, and felt persuaded, the more he recalled his appearance, that he was no other than the defaulter Moneypenny.

What should he do? To write to Eleanor, would be to give her unnecessary pain, since she would, like himself, too soon hear the melancholy intelligence of her father's

failure, and no doubt hasten home—the elopement of Lady Haughton, which was also bruited in the public journals, having removed the great obstacle to that step. After some reflection, he determined to seek an interview with Sir Blundell, and report to him what he had observed.

His heart sank as he rang the bell at Nampced House, and heard its iron voice within, awaking lonely echoes. He deeply sympathised with the fallen man, who, in his prosperity, had been so kind and courteous, more particularly to himself, and, though proud of his grand house, had never shown any grand-house pride. The door was opened by the old valet, who, learning the visitor's object, stated that he had orders to admit no one, but, as he knew him, would take his card to Miss Haughton—whence Harold became aware of Eleanor's return.

After a short absence, the valet reappeared, and conducted him to Eleanor's presence.

There are some natures which, from their congenial qualities, we fathom and comprehend by instinct. Eleanor knew Harold would not have come at such a moment without an object, and, though depressed and heart-sick, she felt consoled by his appearance.

"What misfortunes!" she exclaimed, her eyes brimming with tears. "How different from when we met here last!"

"Then, indeed, it would have been impossible to anticipate such a change," said Harold, at a loss how to offer consolation.

"This makes me feel as though I had some part in it," rejoined Eleanor; "and that if I had been here, it would not have happened."

"Do not charge yourself with such a reproach. As regards Lady Haughton, it may rather be said that your

absence takes from her all excuse, and, of course, you could not influence the affairs of the bank. There Sir Blundell was undone by his partner."

"Ah! that bad man! What would not papa give to discover him!"

"It is on that very subject I wish to see Sir Blundell."

"Indeed! Do you know anything of him? But come to papa and tell him."

And she opened the door behind her, and led him into the room.

Sir Blundell was reclining in his chair in an attitude of deep thought; but, as the door opened, he looked up, without at first recognising Harold.

"Don't you remember Mr. Arkworth, papa?" asked Eleanor.

"Oh yes! How d'ye do, sir?" said Sir Blundell. "I thought it was Sir Everard Danvers."

Harold coloured at the name.

"He has not come yet, papa," said Eleanor; "but I have told Briggs to show him in, as soon as he arrives. Mr. Arkworth has something to tell you about Mr. Moneypenny."

"Ha!" cried Sir Blundell, with sudden interest. "What is it?—what do you know about him?"

"I met a man resembling him at the railway terminus; but if him—as I am now sure it was—he was much disguised. He was probably on his way to Liverpool."

"Then he'll get off," said Sir Blundell, despairingly.

"Have no measures been taken to intercept him?"

"Information has been given to the police, but if he's so disguised, he will no doubt escape recognition."

"If I identified him once, when I had no expectation of meeting him in disguise, I could do so again."

"*You* might, but to the police his person is unknown, and their only clue is his description."

"And is it a matter of importance to you, Sir Blundell, that he should be captured?"

"Of the last importance—so much so, that, overwhelmed as I am, I should now be watching for him myself at Liverpool, only it might be thought I was also meditating flight. But could we recover the money he has carried off, all the liabilities of the firm might be liquidated. More than that, my good name, which shares the tarnish of his flight, would be cleared; and I have no doubt enough would remain from the wreck of my fortune, to secure a moderate independence for myself and Eleanor. If he effect his escape, all must be sacrificed—character, fortune, everything!"

"This shall not be, if I can help it!" exclaimed Harold. "I will proceed immediately to Liverpool, and place myself in communication with the police, so that, if not already gone, his chance of escape will be small."

"Will you indeed do me this service?" cried Sir Blundell. "I have not deserved it from you."

"You have deserved far more—more than I can ever repay, Sir Blundell; and I feel grateful to you for accepting my services. But time is precious, and I will not delay setting out."

Sir Blundell was warm, without being profuse in his thanks, and Harold took leave. Eleanor accompanied him to the hall.

"This is a new proof of your kindness," she said, as they parted. "Could we succeed, all might yet be well. But I fear it is hopeless."

"Let us not despair, while a possibility remains," replied Harold. "What can be done, I will do."

"Of that I am assured," said Eleanor, fervently. And she bade him adieu.

Scarcely had she returned to her father, when they were joined by Danvers.

"Any tidings?—have you discovered any trace of her?" cried Sir Blundell, before he could speak.

"None," replied Danvers. "I thought I was on her track, but it proved a mistake." He turned to Eleanor, exclaiming—"How glad I am to see you! Your presence is a bright spot in this terrible catastrophe."

"Would it might be so!" murmured Eleanor, who, on his first appearance, had, as usual, instinctively shrunk from him, but immediately felt the influence of his winning manner.

"To me at least it can be nothing else," said Danvers, in the same tone. Eleanor turned pale at the compliment; it was the first hiss of the snake. "You have heard nothing, I suppose, of that rascal Moneypenny, Sir Blundell?" he continued.

"Moneypenny—ah! yes!" said Sir Blundell. "He has been seen in disguise on his way to Liverpool."

"By whom?"

"By young Arkworth—you remember young Arkworth, who used to come here."

"Oh yes!" said Danvers, with a smile, which masked his real feelings. "But if he recognised him, why didn't he have him apprehended?"

"He did not know at the time he was a fugitive," said Eleanor, anxious that no blame should attach to Harold. "But he has now gone to Liverpool in pursuit of him."

"Too late!" said Danvers, depreciatingly.

"Too late?" echoed Sir Blundell.

"No doubt of it," returned Danvers. "The steamer

was to sail for America at daybreak this morning; and if Moneypenny is not already in the hands of the police he is off. But I will drive round to Scotland Yard, and inquire if they have any news of him."

"You will let us know the result?" said Sir Blundell, anxiously.

"Instantly," returned Danvers. And he withdrew.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE HOUSEKEEPER.

On reaching Scotland Yard, Danvers found that nothing had been heard of the defaulter, and, as the telegraph would have brought up any news, he was confirmed in his opinion, that he had got off. So far, the flight of Moneypenny had been useful to him, by covering that of Rosalie; but the return of Eleanor, and the presence of Harold, whose observation and vigilance he dreaded, took him by surprise, and obliged him to reconsider his designs. He was already weary of Rosalie, for whom, indeed, his fancy, if he ever entertained one, had long since subsided; and she now fretted him by her low spirits, and galled him by her remorse. From the first he had been struck by Eleanor: her ripening beauty charmed and dazzled him; and though she was no longer the wealthy heiress, he could forego considerations of fortune when they stood in the

way of his passions, impelled by them over every barrier. By prevailing on Rosalie to elope, he had removed the most formidable obstacle to his pursuit of Eleanor; but the incidents of the morning, which so interfered with his plans, showed the necessity of conveying her to a greater distance, where there would be no danger of his double perfidy being discovered.

Rosalie had too soon awakened to the horror of her position. After the first moment of delirium—after the first frenzy of passion, the band, so fixed before, dropped from her eyes, and she saw herself as she was—tainted, fallen. In the dead of the night, the small, still voice—the voice within the breast, which nothing can hush, and nothing overrule—testified against her, making her start from her pillow in a paroxysm of remorse. What burning tears, of anguish, repentance, and shame—tears that fell silently, but from the agony they expressed, might each have been a groan—what bitter, cruel, relentless, and awful thoughts—what gloom, what despair, solitude and night brought her! And all this she must hide from Danvers! To him she must appear cheerful, or, since cheerful she could not be, at least resigned. Vain effort and flimsy dissimulation! The Man of the World, to whom hearts were books, read her thoughts; and she trembled to meet his eye. She felt that she could no longer support the deception, and that her burden, too heavy to be borne, must be lightened by him. What a staff for her hour of need!

Returning from his morning's expedition, Danvers frowned as, on entering the room, he observed on her face the traces of recent tears; but at the moment it was not his object to find fault, and he met her with an appearance of affection.

"But are you not angry with me?" she said, now taking courage to look up.

"Angry!—for what?"

"Because I'm so miserable, so wretched!"

"And why are you miserable and wretched? But I see why!—you do not love me, Rosalie."

"Ah! can you say that?"

"If you did, would you repine, when you must know how your grief distresses me, and that every sigh you heave is a reproach to myself?"

"No, no! how can it be, when all the imprudence and all the guilt are mine!"

"This is the nonsense you talk, and are continually thinking of. I know of no imprudence and of no guilt. Old women may prate of such things, Rosalie; but they are laughed at by people of the world—and justly so. You were trepanned into a marriage with a man you did not love, and who was old enough to be your father; and at length, after bearing this yoke as long as you could, you transfer yourself to me, whom, as you say, you do love, and not without return. What imprudence or what guilt can there be in this? Just look the thing fairly in the face, and you will acknowledge your folly."

"Would I could believe it! But I am comforted by your words, though they do not convince me. It is only when you look coldly—when you seem to think me a fallen, degraded thing—"

She could not proceed: emotion, which she in vain strove to repress, choked her utterance, and escaped in a flood of tears.

"You are positively incorrigible, Rosalie. How can you entertain such thoughts—thoughts so unjust and so *ungenerous*! But I must get you away from this place, and

try what can be done by a change of scene. Make your preparations, and we'll set out this evening for a quiet old place I have in the country, where no one has resided for years, and where we can shut ourselves up from the world, and be happy together."

Rosalie was soothed by the proposal. Her preparations were soon made, and she impatiently awaited the moment of departure.

In the evening they set out; Rosalie, by desire of Danvers, being closely muffled up and veiled, so as to avoid recognition. With the same view, they travelled all night, in a private carriage, keeping their seats the whole way, and, indeed, Danvers allowed nothing to disturb his repose.

Rosalie, more wakeful, watched the gray morning deepening—it could not be said to brighten—in colour. Dull leaden clouds sheathed the sky, as with armour of proof; the country was blank and cheerless; and her spirit partook of its gloom. Danvers awoke fretful and peevish, but recollecting himself, put a curb on his temper, and tried to be agreeable.

"What do you say to a walk, Rosalie?" he cried, after thrusting his head out of the carriage, and taking a survey. "It will refresh us, after being so long cooped up."

"It will be delightful," replied Rosalie.

"In a few minutes we shall reach a path, which leads over the cliffs to the house. We can alight there, and the carriage can go round by the road."

Attaining the spot, the postillion stopped, and they got out. The air, sweeping over the cliffs, was fresh and bracing, indicating the proximity of the sea, which might be heard washing the shingle or dashing among the rocks, though itself screened from view. Nothing could be seen,

indeed, but the naked heights, shelving inland, and rising again at a little distance, so as to bound the prospect. But as they clambered up, the path neared the brink of the cliffs, and, at the highest point, a stile, perched on the extreme verge, actually overhung the steep. Rosalie shuddered as she looked down; and beheld the sea, covering the high breakers below with a sheet of foam. Danvers, who had aided her over the stile, and still held her hand, thought how easily he might here release himself, at once and for ever, from the clog she placed upon him. A push would hurl her from the cliff, the rocks below would dash out her brains, and her body, which alone could reveal her fate, would be swept away with the waves. The hour, opportunity, the secrecy he had been able to preserve, rendering it impossible for their connection to be traced, all suggested themselves to his mind; and scarcely did the idea arise, than he conceived a thousand reasons for putting it into execution. One murder he had planned: another was in his heart. Such are the steps on the ladder of crime!

But Rosalie, as he still meditated, staggered back from the precipice with a sensation of terror.

"What an abyss!" she exclaimed: "it makes me giddy to look down."

"You have no sympathy with the sublime," replied Danvers, in a placid voice, but raising his handkerchief to his face, which he could not so readily compose. "I expected you to burst forth with Gloucester's speech in King Lear, as he stood on the cliff."

"The time is past for that," murmured Rosalie. And they walked on, Danvers not heeding her answer.

Rounding the cliff, they opened an ancient manorial pile, flanking the road, which, continuing its course, fell

into a sort of hollow, breasting the sea, and giving shelter to a small fishing village.

"There's our retreat, Rosalie," cried Danvers, pointing at the mansion. "What do you think of it?"

"All places are the same to me, if I have your society," answered Rosalie, tenderly, for she could say nothing laudatory of the place.

"It will be a change—just for the present," returned Danvers. "But I warn you not to expect any gaiety or any state. No one lives here but my housekeeper—a very superior person, by the way—and an old woman who is her attendant. Will that content you?"

"Yes—anything—while you are with me."

Danvers made no reply. They had struck into another path, slanting off towards the house, and it brought them out, a short distance further on, in front of the lodge. This building, it was easy to see, was untenanted, and the broken gate, the grass-grown avenue, the signs of decay on every side, were additional evidences of the absence of a master.

Arrived at the porch, Danvers pulled the bell; and then, without waiting for a response, pushed open the door. A large dog, of the St. Bernard breed, which had been crouching in the hall, sprang forward as they entered, and recognising Danvers, bounded round them in a transport of delight.

"Down, Cæsar, down!" exclaimed his master.

"Don't drive him away!" said Rosalie. "It's so pleasant to be welcomed, and to know we have at least one friend here." And she laid her hand on the dog's head, patted his neck, and stroked down his sleek coat. Cæsar, unaccustomed to such attentions, intimated his gratification by unmistakable signs, and from that moment

struck up a friendship and permanent alliance with her. Danvers, meanwhile, made his way to a window, and, drawing back the shutter, admitted a flood of light, showing the sombre panels of the hall, hung with faded trophies, and here and there, a quaint old portrait, which, in the still remaining gloom, appeared like the ghost of some former inhabitant.

They had just time to note these objects, when they were joined by the housekeeper, a young and pretty woman, though carelessly dressed, and wearing a strangely sinister look, in keeping with everything around. It was the same woman who had taken charge of Amy.

She cast a scornful glance at Rosalie, scanning her whole person, but, though facing him, avoided the eye of Danvers.

"We've come to spend a few days with you, Gorham," said the latter. "Can you accommodate us?"

"There's the blue room, if you like to have that, and we can get another ready," was the reply.

"That will do," returned Danvers. "Come, Rosalie, we'll take possession at once."

Rosalie followed him up the hall with a faltering step. Crossing a passage, she was agreeably surprised, after such an unpromising approach, to find herself in a pleasant, cheerful apartment, opening on a terrace, and commanding a view of the park. Looking round for Danvers, she discovered he had left the room.

He was standing in the passage with the housekeeper, talking in a low tone.

"Here is the stuff I mentioned," he said, giving her a packet.

The woman, who had so studiously avoided his gaze, now suddenly looked up, with a meaning glance, and

Danvers reddened to the brow. But her eye dropped again directly.

"I'll take care of it," she said, composedly.

"Good," returned Danvers. "Now get us something to eat; and then bring me in this letter, and say a messenger has followed me with it from London. I want to leave in an hour."

"And she is to stay?" said Gorham, with a gesture at the door which divided them from Rosalie.

"Yes. But you had better not let her see the girl. You keep her close, I hope?"

"She has the range of the long gallery, and that is all."

"That will do."

He turned back to the room, where Rosalie was eagerly awaiting his appearance. To sustain his part, he came in full of chat, affecting to be in high spirits, and his poor victim, taking her tone from him, was easily persuaded to be gay, and, for the moment, happy. This continued till they had partaken of breakfast, when Gorham brought in the pretended despatch.

"What a bore!" exclaimed Danvers, as he ran his eye over the contents. "Rosalie, I must leave you, and hurry back to town."

"Leave me, Danvers—and here!"

"My dearest, it must be. But I shall know no rest till I am once more with you."

"Oh! why separate! Let me accompany you, I entreat."

"Impossible! do not harass me, in my present distress, with fruitless repinings. I will be back as soon as I can, and, meanwhile, you can make yourself happy here. There, good-bye! good-bye!" And, embracing her, he placed her, almost unconscious, in her chair.

He was gone, and she was alone.

Yet not altogether; for as she sank back, overwhelmed by her loneliness and desolation, something cold touched her hand, and glancing down, she discovered the dog.

CHAPTER XLIX.

THE MYSTERIOUS APPEARANCE.

Amy was under the same roof—a roof that, from time immemorial, had been fatal to woman; and from the moment it covered her, she fell away. Its solitude, its shadow, its gloom, lighted on her like a blight. Her strength failed, her heart drooped, her delicate frame daily grew weaker, languished and declined.

Through each weary day, from her first arrival, she saw no one but the cold, taciturn woman who had brought her to the house, and who, at stated hours, appeared with her meals, but scarcely uttered a word—though, not regarding Amy as a rival, her demeanour to her exhibited less roughness than she had shown to Rosalie. Sometimes, indeed, her glance rested on the young girl's changed features with an expression of interest, if not pity; and, indeed, it was scarcely possible to meet those meek eyes, so resigned yet so pleading, without being touched. But, though a thrill of natural feeling might be awakened, it made but a brief impression on Mary Gorham, for the milk

of human kindness had long been drained from that stone breast.

Though she knew she might walk in the adjacent gallery, Amy, for some days after her arrival, made no attempt to leave her chamber. She sat at the window, in a sort of apathy, yet with thoughts coming and going, with noiseless wings. At night, they hovered round her pillow, colouring and peopling her dreams, and perhaps, while she slept, other winged attendants were there, as noiseless, and as invisible.

One morning her strength seemed to come back, and her spirit revived. She crept into the gallery, the door of which, reached by a short passage, stood open, as if to invite her to enter. On each side, the walls were garnished with portraits, grim knights, and dames, and courtiers, whose flesh had long since fed the worms, while the thin canvass, less perishable than clay, still preserved their semblance. Amy's eye was arrested by a familiar face: it was the counterpart of the portrait that, as long as she could remember, had hung on the wall of her own home, before adversity had broken it up. Below was this inscription—

HUGH SEAFORD: 1761.

The young girl stood immovable before the picture, partly overcome by surprise, partly by the sense of mystery. But her amazement was increased when, placing her hand on the frame, it came in contact with a secret spring, and the portrait flew back, like a door, disclosing a passage. Her curiosity was excited, and entering, she threaded her way to the end, where another spring, which she easily discovered, opened a sliding panel, and she stood in the presence of Rosalie.

Rosalie and herself were equally surprised, and Cæsar, who was lying at his mistress's feet, bounded forward, with a distrustful growl, stopping midway, as if Amy's appearance reassured him.

"I have seen you before," said Rosalie, kindly, and advancing to the bewildered girl. "What is your name?"

Amy mentioned it.

"Ah! I remember now," returned Rosalie. "You're the daughter of the poor man who was in prison. What has become of him?"

"I don't know," said Amy, her eyes filling with tears. "They brought me here, just as I was looking for him, and I've been detained ever since. Can you tell me what they do it for?"

"Whom do you mean by *they?*" said Rosalie, anxiously.

"Alas! I can't tell you," rejoined Amy. "I know nothing. To me it is all a mystery."

"And are you kept here against your will?"

"I think so, but I have not asked to go, because I thought it would be useless, and all I want is to hear of my father."

"I will write about him to Sir Everard Danvers. You remember him?"

"Oh, yes!" said Amy, with a look of alarm. "It was he sent me here?"

"Ha!" And Rosalie's eyes rested on her face, so lovely, though so pale. "But you are ill, my child," she continued. "You find this place lonely, I dare say—as I myself should, only for my dumb companion." And she patted the neck of the dog, who, encouraged by the caress, threw up his paws on her lap, and tossed his fine head with delight. "Would you like to stay in my room?"

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"I should indeed, if you will let me."

"I shall be very glad of your society. But who this?"

The door flung open, admitting Mary Gorham.

"I thought I heard voices," she exclaimed, furiously. ,nd she demanded of Amy—"How came you here?"

Amy pointed at the aperture.

"Oh! you've discovered that, have you? Well ou'll just walk back, the same way you came."

"Not so," said Rosalie. "I have asked her to remain ;ith me."

"*You* asked her! And who authorised you to nterfere?"

"Woman, you are insolent! If your master were here, ıe would let you know I am your mistress."

"*His* mistress, you mean," returned Mary Gorham, cornfully. "That does not make you mine."

"You say this to me?" cried Rosalie, her whole frame ;rembling with emotion.

"To you or to him! It's true; and why should I mince words? You think you're supreme; but he's no more to you than he has been to me, or a dozen others. But we needn't debate that." And she turned to Amy, adding—"You come away!"

"I tell you, she shall remain with me," said Rosalie, with an effort at composure.

"And I tell you she shan't," replied the virago. And she was making a rush at Amy, when the dog, a not unobservant spectator, rushed between them, growled, and displayed his teeth, maintaining such an attitude that she was afraid to proceed.

"You take the responsibility of this," she cried, with a fierce glance at Rosalie. "*He* will call you to account."

She flounced towards the door, but was followed by Amy, who, gently laying her hand on her arm, arrested her.

"I'll go with you, if you like," she said; "but it's very lonely in my room, and I would rather stay here."

The woman's eye drooped.

"Stop, if you wish," she said; "it won't be for long."

Glad to be allowed to remain, Amy turned to Rosalie, who, as the housekeeper disappeared, sank on the couch, no longer able to repress her feelings. Amy watched her in silence, then approached, sat down by her side, and timidly took her hand.

"My poor child!" said Rosalie, in a tremulous voice. "Can you still remain with me?"

"It is happiness," answered Amy.

"Yet you heard what that woman said—that I was his—that I was the same as herself!" And again the accusing blush suffused her cheek.

"It is not true!" said Amy.

"I know not. But I fear,—I fear!" said Rosalie. And the tears gushed from her eyes.

"Ah! why are you so sorrowful?" cried Amy. "Do not encourage these sad fancies, which are so harrowing, and so unfounded. How can you, so beautiful, so kind, so good, be like this hard woman? Think a moment, and you will be convinced. But—but—"

She could say no more: the agitation she had sustained, after so much anxiety and alarm, was too much for her enfeebled frame, and she sank back insensible.

CHAPTER L.

PURSUIT.

NOTWITHSTANDING what had been said by Sir Blundell, it was not till he reached Liverpool that Harold became fully sensible of the importance of effecting the capture of Moneypenny. Then he learnt, with indignant surprise, that Sir Blundell was suspected of being in collusion with the fugitive, and that it was in contemplation to institute criminal proceedings against him for the purpose of proving this complicity. A reward of £500 was offered by the creditors for Moneypenny's apprehension, though it was believed he had succeeded in getting off in the steamer which had just proceeded to America; and Harold, on making known his mission, found the police very shy of acting with him, partly on account of his connection with Sir Blundell, which excited their suspicions, and partly from an impression that he was looking for a share of the reward.

In this dilemma he saw he could depend on no one but himself, and for two days he traversed the streets, uncertain what to do, but scanning the face of every passenger. The docks, the quays, the wharves, the byways and alleys, were successively visited, but without effect; and all his inquiries proving fruitless, he began to despair of success. He determined, however, not to relinquish the enterprise, while the slightest chance remained; and, continuing his watch, he kept chiefly at the waterside, as

the place where the fugitive was most likely to be met with.

Revolving again and again in his mind all the facts, he thought it improbable that Moneypenny, if still in Liverpool, would depart for America from the docks, where he must expect the police to be on the alert, and it seemed more reasonable that he would join the steamer lower down, or even when she had got out to sea. It became desirable, therefore, to secure a vessel to follow, and board the steamer at some distance, when, whatever precautions might be adopted, all fear of pursuit would have vanished; and he cast his eye on a rakish-looking steam-tug, bearing the appropriate designation of the "Arrow," which lay alongside a wharf, and appeared just suited to the purpose.

Stepping on the deck, he encountered the Captain.

"Can this vessel be hired?" he inquired.

"It depends on when you want her," was the reply.

"Well, say Thursday."

"Thursday you can't have her; she's engaged."

A suspicion flashed across Harold's mind.

"Are you going to tow a vessel out, then?" he asked.

"I don't know what we're goin' to do—some job or other, I suppose. But you can have her any other day."

Harold observed him narrowly; but the skipper, whose bluff manner was above disguise, evidently told all he knew, and nothing could be elicited by further inquiry.

Thursday was the day appointed for the departure of the steamer, which, being an American one, would afford peculiar facilities for escape. Harold determined to pay a visit to the broker, and under pretence of engaging a passage, see if he could pick up any information. The office being close at hand, was soon reached, and he at once opened his business.

"Passage to New York, sir?" replied the broker, eyeing him askance.

"First I want to know what will be the charge," replied Harold.

"You wish a cabin passage?" said the broker, producing a plan of the ship.

"What cabins are vacant?"

There were three unmarked.

"You can have either of those," said the broker, laying his finger on two adjoining. "They are the same price."

"And that?" returned Harold, pointing at the third.

"You can't have that."

"Why not?"

The broker dealt him a sharp glance. "That is reason enough—because you can't!"

"But I've taken a fancy to it," said Harold. "I like the situation, and I don't mind paying double the price for it."

"If you'd give treble the price, it's not to be had."

"Is it taken?"

"That's my business."

"Then, as I can't have that, I'll have no other," said Harold. And he walked out of the office.

He began to think he was on Moneypenny's track, and that he saw through his tactics. This cabin, he felt persuaded, was retained for none but him; and no doubt it was he who had secured the tug with the view of putting him on board the packet at a safe distance. How was his design to be foiled? Eager to act, Harold devised his plans as he walked along; and determined not to communicate them to the police, fearing that their jealousy and mistrust might render them abortive. It was necessary, however, to obtain the services of a constable, to give

authority to his proceedings; and he applied for this assistance at the station.

The Inspector and a brace of satellites were standing in front of the proclamation offering a reward for Moneypenny's apprehension, which was displayed, with a dozen others, of similar import and tendency, on the wall of the room, and a man in plain clothes was listening to their remarks, when Harold made known his errand.

"Humph!" said the Inspector. "Just come aside here." And as they passed out of hearing of the others, he added—"I don't see what good you can do in the matter. If you've got any information, you'd better give it to me, and I'll save you all further trouble."

"It's useless our discussing this question," replied Harold. "If you like to be with me at daybreak on Thursday, and place yourself at my disposal, I shall be happy to avail myself of your services; but I shall make no disclosures till I see fit."

"You are, perhaps, not aware that if you have any information that would further the ends of justice, and suppress it, you can be punished," said the Inspector, threateningly.

"I possess no such information. I am trusting solely to my own observation and judgment, which you may profit by, if you like; and if not, I will apply to a higher authority."

"And be sent back here. You'd better take my advice."

"I see, you're not inclined to assist me," said Harold. And he turned away.

Scarcely had he reached the street, when he was overtaken by the man in plain clothes.

"Servant, sir!" said this individual. "I think we've met before."

"Where?" demanded Harold.

"Well, let me see, I don't exactly remember, but I think you were mixed up with them Chartists somehow, weren't you?"

"Ah! yes. Now I recollect, you're Sergeant Lockyer."

"The very identical," said the Sergeant, with a polite grin. "I thought I knew you, sir. I'm seldom mistook in a face."

"I dare say, not. You're settled in Liverpool now, are you?"

"Well, not to say settled."

"Which means, you're here on a special business: in short, you've come after Mr. Moneypenny."

The Sergeant looked him hard in the face. "I tell you what, sir," he said, "you're a young man of great abilities, and it's a pity you're not in the Force. Now, I like your way of talkin', sir, because it's to the point, and I don't mind takin' you into my confidence; and all I've got to say is, if you can put me in the way of laying my finger on that there man—*halves!* Honour bright's my motto."

"A very handsome proposal," said Harold, smiling; "and my answer is, if you will only let me put your finger on him, the reward shall be wholly yours—every farthing of it."

"Sir, you're a gent, and I'm your man," cried the Sergeant.

Harold had now to engage a steamer, and, walking along the quays, he met with a sharp-looking tug, which, after a little bargaining, he secured: and it was arranged,

on a consultation with the captain, that he and the Sergeant should come on board the next night, when the vessel could drop down the river, and be ready to proceed with the dawn.

Harold paced the deck for the greater part of the night, being too excited to sleep. At a late hour, he saw a steamer glide by, which he had no doubt was the "Arrow," going to pick up Moneypenny on the coast; but he made no remark to the Sergeant, who also watched the little steamer with a strained gaze. Their own craft, by name the "Dart," started at daybreak. It passed the huge Atlantic steamer, which a column of white vapour, escaping from its iron lungs, showed to be on the eve of departure. As the "Dart" neared the open water, the mammoth vessel was seen approaching. Harold thought the time had now come for communicating his design to the Sergeant, which he accordingly did; but that subtle functionary, when informed of the grounds on which it rested, was not so struck by it as might have been expected. He considered Harold's discoveries to be mere surmise, and somewhat angrily remarked that the "Arrow" would be rather behind, as there was no sign of her appearance. But, almost as he spoke, a trail of black smoke rose on the horizon, and Harold pointed to it in triumph.

In an instant the Sergeant was all alert.

"If she puts him on board the steamer now, we're done," he observed; "for our people are stopping till the pilot comes away, and they'll nab him, and get the reward."

"I think the tug won't come to close quarters yet," said Harold. "Do you see a white streamer, in the steamer's mizen? That looks very like a signal to keep

off. We shall see whether it's hauled down when the pilot-boat brings the police away."

"You're a man of observation, sir," said the Serjeant, reassured; "and I respect you for it."

"It's not our object to let him reach the packet," resumed Harold; "for if he once gets on board, she'll put out her speed, and defy pursuit: so when the tug comes up, we must strike in, and grapple her."

"It'll work," said the Sergeant.

They watched anxiously for the departure of the pilot-boat. At length it shoved off; and the white streamer, which had been displayed by the packet, was pulled down. Presently the vessel in the offing altered her course; she gradually drew nearer; and the three steamers began to manœuvre. At last the "Arrow"—for the strange vessel was no other—made a push for the packet, but was intercepted by the "Dart," and veering round, shaped her course for an adjacent point of land, followed by the "Dart," whose object and character could no longer be concealed.

Moneypenny, who was indeed present, had taken every precaution, and secured confederates on shore. When the tug reached the land, a carriage was in waiting, and he jumped in, carrying with him the box containing his ill-gotten spoil. The pursuit was hot, and Harold and the Sergeant, who had seized a vehicle in the Queen's name, evidently gained upon him. Moneypenny saw his only chance was to dive in among the mazes of the rookery, leaving the box in charge of the hack. But the Sergeant was afoot as soon as himself, and, with professional instinct, plunged into the labyrinth. Harold dashed on after the carriage. Now by entreaties, now by promises, he urged on the driver, and at a turn of the road the two vehicles

came in contact, when Harold jumped out, cut the reins of the other's horse, and prevented further progress.

He now sprang into the carriage, but not before some desperate-looking fellows, fishermen and wreckers, had gathered round.

"Hilloa, what d'you want there?" demanded a burly ruffian, laying his hand on the box of treasure, on which Harold had flung himself.

"I have authority for what I do," replied Harold. "That is enough."

"I'll give you enough, if you don't come off," returned the other, making a gripe at his throat.

But Harold eluded his grasp, and at the same time threw him back on his accomplices. This led to a general rush, which the young man met by producing a revolver.

"I have five lives here," he cried; "and I warn you all that I'll certainly fire, if you attempt to molest me."

The uproar that ensued was interrupted by the arrival of Sergeant Lockyer, who came up breathless; and the sight of his staff, together with a pair of handcuffs, which he incidentally exhibited, had more effect on the gang than Harold's revolver.

"He's escaped," he whispered to Harold. "What have you got here?"

"I think it's the money," replied Harold.

The Sergeant ground his teeth.

"The sooner we place it in safety, the better," added Harold.

"You stay inside, and I'll see to that," replied the Sergeant.

He slammed to the door; and, after a brief pause, Harold saw him mount up by the coachman, and they drove rapidly off.

CHAPTER LI.

THE LOST TREASURE.

HAROLD being out of the way, and Rosalie disposed of, Danvers, on returning to town, saw no obstacle to the pursuit of his design on Eleanor. Accordingly, he presented himself at Nampced House, and formally announced his suit to Sir Blundell.

The ruined man heard him with surprise, blended with emotion.

"You are perhaps not aware, my friend," he said, after a pause, "that Eleanor's fortune was invested in the bank, and that she is now, like myself, penniless."

"It is not her fortune that I want," replied Danvers, with his lurid smile, "but herself. Why should we always be talking of money, Sir Blundell?"

"You are too noble," returned Sir Blundell. "Am I to understand that Eleanor's altered prospects will make no change in your intentions?"

"Most certainly. Why should they? Tell me only that my suit has your approval."

"To whom could I so willingly give my child as to yourself, who have won my esteem by your fidelity and friendship? Such a marriage will satisfy my wishes, in every particular."

"You make me happy by your approbation. But may I ask your kind offices with Miss Haughton to secure the same favourable answer from her?"

"They are yours, though with a lady you need only to speak for yourself. But I shall feel a pleasure in acquainting her with your proposal."

"Let it be now, then—at once, my dear Sir Blundell; for I shall be impatient till I know my fate."

"I can refuse you nothing," rejoined Sir Blundell, with feeling. And he went in search of Eleanor.

The young girl hastily dashed a tear from her eye, as he entered her boudoir, and stepped forward to meet him.

"Dear papa, you look better to-day," she said, taking his hand in both hers. "How this cheers me!"

"And I am cheered in you, Elly," replied Sir Blundell —"my dear, dear child, all that remains to me! I know not how I can part from you."

"We will never part again."

"It must be, dear Elly. You are loving, gifted, and beautiful, and will be always sought for, and always admired. And my happiness will be secured in yours, because I shall see you united to a man I esteem, and whose fortune will sustain you in your natural sphere."

Eleanor raised her eyes with a startled glance.

"Yes, Elly," pursued the baronet, never anticipating any scruple, "you are to be married. My dear girl will be provided for—will obtain an establishment as splendid as if she were still an heiress! This you owe to your own attractions, and your own merit, dear Elly. Sir Everard Danvers does not care for gold. He seeks only your hand."

"Ah! papa! dear papa!" sobbed Eleanor.

"Come, these are foolish tears," replied Sir Blundell, with a fond caress. "I must send Danvers to chase them away."

"Oh, no! no!" cried Eleanor. "Do not press me with

this proposal, papa. Why should I marry, when it would separate me from you? At least, let me have time to reflect—to consider what answer I should make."

"Impossible, Elly! Danvers is only waiting till I join him, to come to you himself. And how can you possibly hesitate? What consideration is required for a proposal which exceeds all we could wish, and which the noblest family in England might welcome? Remember, this roof is no longer ours. In a few days we quit it for ever, and shall then be without a home, without a penny, and, if I except Danvers, without a friend. No, you must give your answer now; and when you think of your forlorn condition—when you think of your ruined father, your heart will tell you what it should be."

Eleanor could not reply; but, as he pressed her in his arms, she returned his embrace, and he left the room assured of her compliance.

The young girl wrung her hands in despair. Too clearly she saw that the proposal, in her present situation, was one that she would be deemed mad to decline. And on what possible plea could she ground her refusal? No previous attachment could be urged; for, sought as she had always been, never before had her love been asked. *Never asked!* But does the heart conceive no secret preferences?

Her tears—and bitter they were—flowed unrestrained, but they did not weaken her purpose. In this moment of trial, she remembered her resolution to devote her future life to her father, and the time had come for giving it effect. All youthful dreams, all feeling for self, every flattering hope and treasured wish, of which no eye but her own had ken, must now be given up, and romance be succeeded by reality. Yet no! for her very misery was romantic—romantic in its self-denial and devotion.

She succeeded in attaining a degree of composure before she was joined by Danvers, who, though elated by his success, was, in his demeanour, sober and guarded.

"This is a rapturous moment!" he exclaimed, clasping her hand. "You have made me the happiest of men. Yet let me hear—hear from your own lips, dear Eleanor, that I do not deceive myself, and that you will indeed be mine."

"I cannot but feel flattered by your proposal," replied Eleanor, falteringly, and keeping her eyes on the floor; "but I reproach myself for accepting it, knowing your affection might be more worthily bestowed."

"More worthily it could not be—more unreservedly, impossible! I shall know no peace till you share my fortune, and bear my name. But," he added, seeing it would be unwise to protract this interview, "I must lead you to Sir Blundell, and claim his sanction to our immediate union."

"Oh! not immediate, I entreat!"

"It must be, dear Eleanor. I would defer to your wishes—unwillingly indeed, but still without a murmur—but circumstances forbid. Do not, then, demur, when delay could be no advantage."

As they joined Sir Blundell, the valet ushered in Mr. Silverlock, who had acted as the lawyer of Mrs. Addlefield at the marriage of Rosalie.

"I have come to you on a painful business, Sir Blundell," he said, with a cold bow, before Danvers and Eleanor could speak.

"Relating to Lady Haughton, sir, I presume," replied Sir Blundell, agitatedly.

"No, sir. My connection with Lady Haughton ceased from the moment she assumed that name. I am here on behalf of a committee of your creditors. But what I have to say is, for the present, private."

"I had better retire, Sir Blundell," said Danvers, hough without moving away.

"By no means," returned Sir Blundell. And he dded to Mr. Silverlock—"You may speak out, sir; in act, Sir Everard Danvers and my daughter are the same s myself."

The lawyer, without directly replying, drew forth a ocket-book, and produced three documents, folded in such way as to reveal only the signature.

"Are those signatures yours?" he demanded.

"Undoubtedly," replied Sir Blundell.

"All three?"

"Yes, all three."

"That one is not, papa, I think," interposed Eleanor, imidly.

Sir Blundell looked at it again.

"It appears to be mine," he observed.

"You acknowledge it," said Mr. Silverlock.

"Yes."

Mr. Silverlock unfolded the paper.

"You observe it is a transfer of £50,000 stock, constituting the reserve fund of your bank, and sold on the lay the bank broke."

"I never signed such a document," rejoined Sir Blundell; "and I see now the signature, though accurately mitated, is not mine."

"That you must prove before a magistrate."

"Sir!"

"Sir Blundell, it is better I should speak to you in plain terms. This money is missing; it is said to have been fradulently disposed of, and, as it was obtained by Mr. Moneypenny with your signature, the creditors hold you, not him, responsible for it. Under such circumstances,

I have but one course to pursue: and if the money is not forthcoming when called for, I must give you into custody."

Danvers had listened to this colloquy without interfering. He began to think that he had been too precipitate in his proposal to Eleanor; and that, in the desperate situation of Sir Blundell, which would probably throw her on the world without a protector, he might have obtained his object on easier terms. He concluded, however, after a moment's consideration, that, whatever course he might pursue ultimately, it would at present be politic to appear as Sir Blundell's friend.

"This is strong language, Mr. Silverlock," he observed, while Sir Blundell and Eleanor stood mute with consternation. "Sir Blundell's conduct and character are above reproach, and should claim more consideration."

"With that, sir, I have nothing to do. My business is to recover the money."

"Would to heaven you could!" exclaimed Sir Blundell, despondingly. "What is this?" he added, as Eleanor put into his hand a letter brought by the valet.

"I would not interrupt you, papa, but it's a telegraphic despatch from Liverpool," replied Eleanor, in tremulous accents.

"From Liverpool!" He tore open the paper, and instantly exclaimed—"You may return to your clients, Mr. Silverlock, and tell them their interests are secure."

"How?" cried the lawyer and Danvers together.

Sir Blundell handed the despatch to Eleanor, who read aloud:—

"Harold Arkworth, Liverpool, to Sir Blundell Haughton, Kensington—All well. I have recovered the money —£50,000."

Eleanor could read no more, but threw her arms round her father's neck, and burst into tears.

CHAPTER LII.

CONVEYANCERS.

THE news of the recovery of the treasure carried off by Moneypenny flew through the City, and electrified the commercial world. Everybody was in spirits; the amount was magnified threefold; and it was rumoured, on credible authority, that the bankrupt firm would not only pay twenty shillings in the pound, but that the assets would yield a large balance, over and above every claim, as a retirement for Sir Blundell.

A romantic account of the affair appeared next day in the newspapers, awarding great praise to Harold, and mentioning the arrival of the money in town, in charge of himself and Serjeant Lookyer. By universal consent it was deposited with Sir Blundell, whose character now came out so high, that it commanded unlimited confidence, and not the faintest breath was raised against him.

It was natural that these incidents should attract public attention; and, in fact, they formed the prominent topic of conversation at all places of resort. Among others who took an interest in the matter were Ned Hawker and the sweep.

They were seated in the back yard of a public-house—the identical "Bag-o'-Nails" to which the sweep had referred Lawyer Smart, on the occasion of their meeting in Holborn. No one else was near; but a dog, secured by a chain to the wall, kept watch and ward over an

upright stand, garnished with pewter pots; and from an adjacent shed came unmistakable sounds of skittles.

"I tell you what it is," said Hawker, "the thing can be done as clean as ninepence. I know the house well, and all the servants are discharged but an old couple, both of 'em past work, and so no good for resistance. Think of the sight of gold we shall come upon! Why, if we can only bring away a few handfuls, our goose is cooked."

"I don't fancy the job. I'd rather give over thievin' if I could," replied the sweep.

"If you could. But you can't."

"I don't know that."

"Why, what else can you do?"

"Drown myself."

"You couldn't do it, Mike—not if you were to try ever so," returned Hawker, with a grin. "You're marked out for Calcraft, and he'd fork you up from the bottom of the Thames. Come, take a swig, and screw up your pluck. I needn't go beggin' for a pal, for any one 'ud jump at such a plant; but I like to work with them I know, and especially with an old chum. Now, here's swag that belongs to nobody, and all we've got to do is to go and take it, and yet you won't. Why, even if you're limed, what is it? After clearing off from Norfolk Island, you'd hardly let 'em keep you in Newgate."

"Don't be lipping that," muttered the sweep, looking round. "If I am to go, I'll go. But we had better uncouple now, or we'll be suspected."

"Very well," said Hawker. "Meet at one at the end of the lane. I'll bring the tools. It's no use going earlier, as there'll be moonlight till then."

They left the house together, taking different directions as they passed out.

At the appointed hour, they met as arranged, in the lane adjoining Nampced House. The moon, of which Hawker was so timid, had not disappeared, but she was on the verge of the heavens, and gave but little light. Scaling the wall, the burglars made their way across the garden to the mansion. All was quiet; and emboldened by the stillness, they unmasked their lantern, and carefully examined the lower windows. To a professional eye, it was instantly apparent that an entry could not be effected without noise; but the sweep, after a glance round, pointed to a window above, opening on a ledge, and apparently unprotected by a shutter, which presented a more promising aspect.

"But how are we to get up there?" asked Hawker.

"Jump on my back," was the reply.

Complying, Hawker was able to clutch the coping, and jerked himself over the ledge.

"Now lend us a hand," muttered the sweep.

Hawker bent over, as far as he was able; and the sweep caught his hand, struck his foot against the wall, and was up in an instant.

"You run up a house like a cat," said Hawker, astonished. "But the window's bolted. We must out with the glaze."

To remove a pane of glass was an easy task, when the sweep thrust his hand through the aperture, and drew back the fastening. They had, however, yet to raise the window, and this was necessarily attended with noise, but a gust of wind coming at the moment covered the operation, rendering every other sound undistinguishable.

Passing through, their naked feet lighted on the landing of a staircase. The sweep led the way upward, and Hawker followed, asking no questions, and relying im-

plicitly on the superior instinct of his accomplice. At the summit, they paused simultaneously before a door, in the centre of the corridor.

"This must be the governor's crib," said the sweep, between his teeth; "and if so, here's where the swag's stowed."

Hawker assented.

They listened with strained ears, but not a breath was heard. Then, trying the door, and finding it locked, they applied a skeleton key, and quickly gained entrance.

From the threshold they surveyed the room, hesitating to enter. At first it was all gloom, but gradually the more prominent objects loomed up; and, as they stood quite still, the sweep heard the deep breathing of a sleeper. He stole on tiptoe to the bed, and Hawker followed.

"Stand by him, while I have a search," whispered the sweep.

He turned on the lantern, and glanced it round the room, keeping it low down, so as to throw no reflection on the bed. There were several boxes, and all appearing much alike, he began with the nearest, intending to take them in succession. Hawker watched his movements without being able to see what he was doing. Suddenly the lid of the box fell with a slam, and Sir Blundell started up.

The two thieves, by a common impulse, kept perfectly still. Not the slightest sound could be heard, and Sir Blundell peered round the room without discovering their presence. But he was not satisfied. The treasure, as the burglars had supposed, was really in his room, and it kept him anxious and timid. He slid on the floor, and was igniting a match, when his arms were seized behind, and he was flung violently down on the bed.

"Say a word, and you're done!" muttered Hawker.

But Sir Blundell, though a knife gleamed before his eyes, loudly called for help, at the same time making a desperate effort to free himself. Hawker, however, with the aid of a piece of cord, so effectually pinioned his arms, that he was powerless; and a gag stifled his cries.

"Look sharp," said Hawker to the sweep, "or we'll have the flunkey here before you find it. I'd better go and secure him."

"Go," was the surly answer.

Hawker darted from the room. As he ran along the corridor, he came in contact with Eleanor, who, hearing her father's outcry, had drawn on a morning robe, and was hastening to his room.

"Now, then, who are you?" cried Hawker.

Eleanor replied by a scream.

"You want a taste of this, do you?" said the ruffian, brandishing his knife.

"You have murdered my father, cruel man!" cried Eleanor, with hysteric vehemence. "You shall not escape, though you kill me! Harold! Harold! help!"

He tried to throw her down, but she clung round him, and, as he got his arm free, Harold, who was passing the night in the house, came up. Directly he appeared, Hawker made a plunge with his knife, and drew back. Harold rushed at him: there was a struggle, brief but desperate, and the report of a pistol rang in the air. The burglar, without waiting to see the effect of his shot, flew down the stairs. He knew assistance would now arrive, and his only object was to get off, while retreat was practicable. The sweep simultaneously came to the same conclusion, making for the window by which they had entered. They were pursued with desperate resolution by Harold,

who paused only to ascertain that Eleanor was unhurt, and dashed on, regardless of himself.

Hawker was gone; but the sweep, as he alighted on the terrace, found himself seized by the leg, and falling over, was secured by a couple of policemen. A rattle was heard, which, spreading the alarm, brought up more succours, and, seeing one of the burglars in custody, Harold hastened to look after Sir Blundell.

By repeated efforts the baronet had slipped the cord from his hands, and, thus at liberty, threw on his clothes. Hardly had he done so, when he was joined by Eleanor and Harold, who entered at the same moment.

Eleanor threw her arms round him. She saw he was unhurt; and her feelings found relief in tears.

"Come, come, Elly, be composed!" said Sir Blundell. "I hope there is nothing to cry about, as no one seems to be injured. And we have now to thank you for another great service, Mr. Arkworth."

Eleanor was recalled by these words.

"Yes," she said: "we can never thank him enough. To his timely interference I owe my life, papa. But is this blood?" And she added to Harold—"It comes from you! Ah! where are you hurt?"

"It is nothing—only a gash in my arm," replied Harold.

But the knife, cutting through his coat, had struck deep; and the red tide still oozed out. Both Eleanor and her father were alarmed; and Sir Blundell insisted on sending for a doctor. Meanwhile, Eleanor, with a woman's tenderness, bared and washed the wound, not thinking that her delicate touch, sending a thrill through Harold's veins, made the blood flow quicker.

And what were her own feelings as she reflected he had

received this wound in her defence? She knew not; for they were a whirl, a chaos.

The doctor, brought in by the valet, relieved her anxiety. He did not think the wound of any importance, and, having applied a dressing, contented himself with recommending quiet, and withdrew.

The police had carried off the sweep; doors and windows were made secure; and Nampced House, with all it contained, was again at rest.

CHAPTER LIII.

TOO LATE.

SHE had called him by his name—HAROLD! It is true she was in danger, excited, terrified: but the fact remained! Her voice still rang in his ear—melodious even in its terror; and, at every recurrence, it made his heart bound. Vain to think of sleep, while he was enchained by such a serenade!

Should he divulge his long-concealed, secret love to Sir Blundell? Should he own that, from the moment of their first meeting, he had loved, adored, and worshipped Eleanor? This was not a time to make such a confession —when, pressed on every side, Sir Blundell was in distress, and he had subjected him to obligations. But might he not tell Eleanor herself? She was now poor, and he

could offer her a home: she was under her father's roof, and might listen to his addresses! If she encouraged—if she did not reject him, then an opportunity would arrive, when all this trouble was over, for obtaining the sanction of Sir Blundell.

That was what he would do. The thought, once aroused, glowed in his mind like fire; and he could not turn from it. It riveted and it fascinated. But though his eyes were indeed kept awake—though his mind and imagination were so active—he was not without dreams.

Such dreams! He believed she might accept him—might consent to be his. Then, what could earth, with its untold treasures, give more!

But if she refused! The mere thought—the bare possibility of such a result, made his heart quail.

How impatiently he waited for day, that he might fly at once to Eleanor, and learn his fate. At length it arrived: Eleanor, like himself, was an early riser; and, with his purpose unshaken, he proceeded in search of her.

The young girl was sitting in the garden when she saw him approach. The spot, screened by trees, was secluded, so that he was close upon her before he was observed; and, as she was rising, he seated himself at her side.

"I don't know that I should let you be here," she said, after inquiring about his wound. "Should you not have seen the doctor before you ventured out?"

"Oh, no!" replied Harold. "You attach too much importance to my little casualty, which will disappear in a day or two. And I am so glad to find you alone; for alone I wished to see you—to speak to you, if I have your permission."

Eleanor appeared surprised, and though there was

nothing in her look to repel, but rather a kindly, inquisitive interest, Harold felt chilled.

"Forgive me," she said, somewhat reproachfully; "but are you not too formal? I should not expect so old a friend to be so punctilious."

"You don't know what I want to say. How could you! It's hard to conceive I could be so mad, so desperate. Ah, Eleanor!—yes, let me pronounce that name—I love you! with my whole heart, my whole soul, in every thought and hope and feeling. From the first time I heard your voice and saw your face—before I knew you, dear Eleanor—your image was shrined in my mind, and I lived by its light. You are silent! You despise and disdain me."

"No! no!" she murmured; but her choked voice did not reach his ear.

"I am poor—very poor," he continued. "I have no right to look for such a prize—such happiness! But do not spurn me, dear Eleanor. I can offer you indeed no gold, no splendid mansion, which you can command and would adorn; but there is a treasure in an honest heart, a treasure of affection and sympathy, which I thought my Eleanor would not contemn."

"You did me but justice," said Eleanor, with an effort, "but—"

"Ah! why but? If you have determined to reject me, and count my love as nothing, do not say the cruel word. Give me a respite—give me time; and something tells me I shall succeed. At least I shall be able to show my devotedness."

"You have shown it already. But—but you never told me all this."

"How could I, without taking advantage of your

situation, and betraying your confidence? Often the words rose to my lips, but the fear that I might offend, or, perhaps, alarm you, prevented their utterance. But I tell you now, dear Eleanor—tell you trembling, but not in despair!"

"Too late!" said Eleanor, pressing her hand on her throbbing heart.

"Too late!" And he sprang up. "Ah! retract those words! What can—what do they mean!"

"I am engaged. My hand is promised to Sir Everard Danvers!"

To Danvers! What a torrent of burning words, big with the heart's agonies, burst from his lips, fierce, headlong, and uncontrollable. But she heard them not; she neither heard nor saw. Of one thing only was she conscious, that he bade her farewell—and that he was gone!

CHAPTER LIV.

THE CONFESSION.

DAY by day Amy drooped more, with occasional brief intervals, when her spirit, rather than her constitution, seemed to rally, and revivify her frame. Rosalie, won by her gentleness, had become attached to her, and watched her decline with anxious interest. They passed their time together, without interruption from Mary Gorham; and, in her saddest moments, Rosalie was beguiled by the artless simplicity and docility of her companion. At length, Amy was unable to leave her room; then she took to her bed, and Rosalie insisted on being her nurse.

It is in the time of illness that woman's real nature reveals itself, and she exhibits qualities which, in happier hours, may lie dormant, unknown to herself. Who could see anything of selfishness in Rosalie now? Tending the sick girl with a mother's devotion, smoothing her pillow, watching her slumbers, she took no thought for her own health, but made Amy her whole care. Mary Gorham also appeared interested. Without a word from Rosalie, she called in a country practitioner, who lived in the neighbourhood; and herself administered his medicines. But they were of little use to Amy, though occasionally she exhibited a marked change, as if the disease were at length vanquished, and was about to disappear.

"You'll be able to get up again soon," said Rosalie, as she sat one morning by her bedside, bending an anxious

gaze on her face. "You're so improved: you're eyes are brighter, and the colour is coming back to your cheek. Are you not stronger, too?"

"Oh, yes! and I feel so relieved, so soothed. Before, I seemed turned into stone."

"My poor Amy! you have indeed suffered!"

"And how kind you have been to me, dear Lady Haughton! It is so pleasant to look up at your beautiful face, and know you are here. It would console my poor father—and Harold, too—if they knew how carefully I am nursed."

"I wish we knew where to address them, Amy. But do not repine on that account, as I have written to one who will find them, and help us out of all this mystery."

"I do not repine, only I should like to see them—oh! so much!"

"Do not keep your mind upon it, Amy: think of something else. I wish I had a cheerful book: I would read to you."

"Ah! that would be so delightful. There's a Testament in the drawer; I found it there before I was taken ill, and used to read it. But how can I ask you, whom I trouble so much, to take this new task upon you?"

"It will be no task, if you like to hear it. But will it not make you dull?"

"Dull! oh, no! it makes me happy. How I love those sweet words—'Come unto me, ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' And again—'Let not your hearts be troubled.' The Gospel is all the same, wherever you read—so full of comfort and peace?"

Rosalie, without making a reply, went to the drawer, and drew forth the Testament.

"Shall I read to you the 8th chapter of St. John?" she said, as the volume opened at that page.

"If you please."

Rosalie began, in a clear voice, scarcely heeding what she read, and came to the 3rd verse:—

"'And the Scribes and Pharisees BROUGHT UNTO HIM A WOMAN——'"

She uttered a cry, and the book fell from her hand.

"You are ill," exclaimed Amy. And the thought nerved her own limbs, so that, in her excitement, she got out of bed, and threw her arms round Rosalie, who had started up, with her hands clasped on her forehead, like one distracted.

"Do not touch me," she said: "I am not fit to be touched. I am——"

"What?" faltered Amy, with blanched lips.

"What I cannot name, or you hear," said Rosalie, convulsively. "It is too vile, too wicked!"

"Do not say that; for I will not believe it. It needs only to look at your face to know you are good and innocent."

"Innocent!" cried Rosalie, with a shudder. And she buried her face in her hands.

"As much as mortal can be," said Amy, "though none are innocent in the sight of God. But He makes an allowance for our infirmity, and the prophet says,—'He knoweth whereof we are made, he remembereth we are but dust.'"

"Does the prophet say that?" asked Rosalie, slowly raising her head.

"Yes—David says it."

"But I am baser than the dust. I ——, I am ——" she dropped her head on Amy's shoulder, and her lips touched her ear.

The young girl's pale cheek grew paler; and a look of terror passed over it: then her arm, undeterred by any scruple, encircled the poor penitent's neck, and owned her for a sister.

"Is there hope for me?" sobbed Rosalie.

"Though your sins be as scarlet, though they be as crimson, there is hope—nay, there is forgiveness," said Amy, solemnly. And her voice and look were those of an angel.

"Oh! say it again! show me the passage!" exclaimed Rosalie. "Let me feel I can be forgiven, and death will be a relief."

"You must pray—we will both pray!" And Amy sank on her knee. Her lips, still so pale, did not move; but her eyes—and it was easy to see her heart also—were raised to God, and the light of faith illumed her face. Rosalie threw herself down by her side, but she could not look up, and her throbbing brow was pressed on the bed, in abasement and despair.

Amy waited till the vehemence of her feelings had subsided. Then, by degrees, she soothed and calmed her, and, now that her dread secret was told, Rosalie felt relieved.

Relieved, but not comforted, not cheered. Oh, no! Never more could she be cheered. The thorn, with its barbed point, was in her flesh: it festered and cankered, and nothing could extract it. Truly was she penitent; and, like the fallen woman of old, knelt at her Saviour's feet, and washed them with her tears. But still the wound bled. Day and night, the accusing voice of conscience denounced her guilt, and no other voice seemed to say, "Go and sin no more!"

And where was the partner of her fall, her tempter

and betrayer? Already he had cast her off; and the love she had destroyed herself to secure, now, in her desolation, was gone for ever. His absence, his silence, his cruel neglect, however she might cover them with excuses, would bear no other interpretation. Then why did she remain under his roof? why did she not fly, outcast that she was, to some obscure refuge, where she might hide her guilty head, and devote her remaining days to repentance and remorse? Firmly she resolved to do so. But, meanwhile, it would be cruel, she thought, to desert Amy. Let her but see Amy convalescent, and she would instantly depart, leaving no clue to her retreat.

Mary Gorham, who watched her every movement, without seeming to obtrude herself, was surprised at the change in her demeanour. Before, she had been patient, but her patience was blended with unconscious disdain; now she was meek, humble, even submissive. The housekeeper was herself very quiet; but Rosalie never met her eye that it did not make her tremble.

Once she went to her room unexpectedly, to obtain a drink for Amy, when she turned upon her with a scowl, which, however, immediately disappeared, and she threw her apron over a bottle on the table, looking like Amy's medicine, and which she had in her hand when Rosalie entered.

"Here's the barley-water," she said, sullenly. "You can carry it to her yourself."

Rosalie took up the jug, and had just reached the passage, when the housekeeper overtook her.

"Here's her medicine," she said, presenting a vial—the same that had stood on the table. "It's time she had it."

Rosalie made no demur. She saw by the label the

draught was to be taken directly, and on gaining the chamber, she presented it to Amy. Amy had hardly swallowed it, when, as she again sunk on her pillow, her whole frame became convulsed; then it lay stretched and rigid; the muscles of her face protruded, and her eyes seemed to start from her head. Rosalie, alarmed and horrified, screamed for help, and Mary Gorham rushed in.

"What is the matter?" she cried, agitatedly.

Her sudden appearance would have surprised Rosalie, only her attention was absorbed by Amy.

"I cannot tell," she replied; "the poor child seems paralysed."

"She wants raising," returned the housekeeper, with her usual imperturbable manner. "There, you feel better now, don't you?" she said to Amy, as she lifted her head.

"Yes—much, much better," answered Amy.

The housekeeper, with some appearance of commiseration, propped her up with pillows, and then withdrew, leaving Rosalie to watch her. But the convulsions did not return, and gradually Amy fell asleep.

The doctor came in, and Rosalie mentioned the occurrence.

"Do you think it could be the medicine?" she added —"for the attack followed directly she drank it."

Mary Gorham fixed her eyes on the doctor.

"Impossible!" he replied.

"It can be tested, if you like, sir," said the housekeeper. "It is just the time to take the second draught, and it looks the same thing."

"It's precisely the same," rejoined the doctor, "and she had better take it at once, while I am here."

The draught was poured out, and Amy, with some

reluctance, drank it off. Far from convulsing, it seemed to revive her.

"Come, it's nothing so serious, after all," said the doctor. "A little passing spasm, I dare say. You'll be better to-morrow, my young friend."

And, after a few directions to Rosalie, he took his departure.

Rosalie resumed her seat at the bedside, so concerned for Amy, that her own sorrows, though not forgotten, were unthought of. The dog, who never left her, crouched at her feet.

"How faithful poor Cæsar is!" observed Amy. "You might leave him to watch by me, while you took some rest."

"I am not tired, thank you," replied Rosalie; "and I could not trust you even to Cæsar." And she added half-playfully, half-reproachfully, "Do you want to get rid of me?"

"Ah, never! I shall feel it so sad to part from you."

"Yet we must part—one day, dear Amy."

"That is the trial. Could we all go together—you, and dear father, and ——"

"Whom else?"

A tinge of colour came in Amy's cheek.

"Harold," she said, faintly.

"Always Harold," replied Rosalie, looking at her.

Amy inclined her head.

"And where would you have us go?"

"To heaven."

Rosalie clasped her hands. "Would we might!" she murmured. "But for me!—" Her eyes filled with tears, and she did not continue the conversation.

Amy had a better night, but next morning was still feverish and languid. After supplying her wants, Rosalie,

as usual, went to the housekeeper's room for the barley-water.

The room was vacant; and her eye, looking round the room, casually fell on a newspaper spread open on the table. She took it up, and read the following paragraph:—

"APPROACHING MARRIAGE IN HIGH LIFE.—We are enabled to state that Sir Everard Danvers, Bart., of Seaford Manor, will shortly lead to the hymeneal altar the accomplished Miss Haughton, only daughter of Sir Blundell Haughton, Bart., so well known in fashionable and commercial circles, and whose affairs have recently occupied a large share of public attention."

Rosalie could hardly believe her eyes. Danvers married to another, and that other Eleanor, the daughter of the man whom, in violation of every moral tie, they both had wronged and dishonoured! It must not be! She would write directly to Danvers, and enjoin him, as he desired to avoid a discovery of his perfidy, at once to abandon the project. The thought so engrossed her attention, that she was unconscious of the entry of Mary Gorham, who, approaching with a stealthy step, confronted her before she was observed.

"Well," she said, with a malignant smile, "have you read it?"

"What?" replied Rosalie, mechanically.

The housekeeper put her finger on the paragraph.

"How false he is!" she exclaimed—"false as yourself." And her lip curled with scorn.

Rosalie did not retort: her heart, so rebellious formerly, deemed contumely and insult a part of her expiation.

CHAPTER LV.

SUCCESS.

For three days Harold was overwhelmed. Then, by an effort, he roused himself, and sought relief in occupation. But he was a sadder, if not wiser man. The blight of feeling, which so few escape, had fallen upon him; and he was awakened to the vanity of human wishes. The bright auguries of youth, the fond hopes of his heart, the dreams of an honourable ambition, so long fostered and cherished, were now overthrown, crushed, and dispelled. But in this he was not singular. We all partake of the baptism of sorrow; and few realise, in the stirring vicissitudes of life, the anticipations and imaginings of our secret meditations. Too soon we learn that existence is but a breath. Youth fades as it appears; and while we ponder how it shall be enjoyed, it is gone!

His play, which had been some time finished, had been accepted at a leading theatre, and was now in course of rehearsal. This afforded him some amelioration, by kindling a new interest in his mind; for, where more potent excitements fail, the gentle predilections of authorship are a relief and consolation. Harold, indeed, did not feel so interested as he would have been, had the incident occurred when life was yet unscathed, but he still hailed it with satisfaction, and took an active part in superintending the preparations on the stage.

On the night of the representation, the house was well

attended; and the expectation of the audience excited a kindred feeling in Harold. As he stood in the pit looking round, his eye was attracted by a party in a private box, composed of Phœbe Mayburn, Ashleigh, and Mrs. Windham, and they simultaneously beckoned him to join them.

The meeting was gratifying to all, though Phœbe, whose emotions were of a conflicting kind, trembled as she spoke. During the overture, Mrs. Windham contrived to secure Harold.

"All settled," she observed, in a whisper, glancing at Phœbe and Ashleigh.

"Indeed," said Harold.

"They'll be married in a fortnight."

"So soon?"

"Yes. It's not my business, and I neither meddle nor make, but I know who'd have been preferred, if he'd only played his cards properly."

"Surely, no one!"

"I'm of a different opinion. But then it's no business of mine, and it's too late now. Young people will play at cross purposes. But, see! they're going to begin." And the curtain drew up.

The first act, scarcely opening the plot, made little impression, but was favourably received. At its close, Harold was addressed by Phœbe.

"I did not observe your arm was in a sling?" she said. "Is it anything serious?"

"Oh, no! a mere scratch," replied Harold.

"But you have been ill? At least, I form that impression from your looks, though it's not complimentary to say so."

"It has been illness of the mind."

"Ha! but we all have that, at some time or other. Don't you remember what you told me?—that happiness was a shadow! But you gave it as the opinion of philosophers, not as your own."

"It is my own now."

"I'm sorry for that, but am not surprised, being a convert myself."

"You are converted too soon."

"It bursts on some earlier, and some later," said Phœbe, a tear gathering in her eye. "Do you know what it has taught me?"

"I should like to know."

"To think more of others, and less of myself."

"But that was always your principle."

"No, I thought too much of self. But if I can now only act up to this lesson, the discipline, though severe, will be salutary." But her tone was sad and plaintive.

"You speak like a woman," said Harold. "Men can't practise this philosophy, or I should rather say, this religion. We console ourselves by seeking excitement and action, you by self-abnegation."

Here the curtain again rose, and, as the play proceeded, Phœbe grew deeply interested. She seemed, indeed, to have lost little of her capacity for enjoyment, though her manner was so sobered; and there was even something cheerful in her serenity. Ashleigh almost worshipped her; and if his heart had ever strayed, it was easy to see that it was now unalterably fixed.

"You've heard of my good fortune, I presume," he said to Harold, apart, stealing a covert look at Phœbe.

"Yes; and I sincerely congratulate you."

"I'm sure you do," said the squire, heartily. "You must come and spend your holiday with us, when you leave

town; and see how happy we shall be. Now, you promise to come?"

Harold assented.

"How can you go on talking, during this exciting performance?" said Phœbe, with a reproving smile. "I believe you're the only two persons in the house who are uninterested."

"You must not say I am uninterested," replied Harold.

"You ought not to be. As a literary man, you should sympathise with the author."

"So I do, believe me."

It was not hard to believe, when the audience, from the gallery downwards, seemed spell-bound, and in the vast throng not a whisper arose.

A box on the other side of the house was occupied by Sir Blundell Haughton, Danvers, and Eleanor. The latter, who had passively accompanied her father, on the proposal of Danvers, at first was a listless spectator; but, like Phœbe, insensibly became absorbed by the performance.

"I am glad you are so interested," observed Danvers. "You see, it has done you good to come."

"Yes," said Sir Blundell; "she has been moping too much, but she must now get out a little—in fact, it's most essential."

"And you like the play," said Danvers.

"It's admirable," replied Eleanor.

As it progressed, the performance became more thrilling; and attention, if possible, more fixed. At length, the curtain fell amidst tumultuous applause; and there was a general call for the author.

"Who is he?" asked Phœbe. "It's strange his name is not given."

"No one seems to know it," replied Ashleigh.

"I think Mr. Arkworth knows, from his smiling so," said Phœbe. "However, he'll have to appear now, whoever he is, or they'll pull the house down."

"It's no business of ours if they do," observed Mrs. Windham.

"No; but I do hope he'll present himself," said Phœbe. "I should so like to see him."

"If you say the word, I'll undertake he shall appear," observed Harold.

"Then, the word is said," replied Phœbe, laughing. "But though I may call authors from the vasty deep, I doubt if they'll come for my calling."

"I am more obedient," said Harold. And, to Phœbe's amazement, he presented himself in front of the box.

The uproar instantly subsided, and a round of cheers, coming from every lip, burst from all parts of the house. But in the height of the ovation, Harold discerned Eleanor; and his heart, which had begun to feel elated, sank within him. He bade a hasty adieu to his friends, and without waiting to receive their congratulations, quitted the box and the house.

CHAPTER LVI.

FLIGHT.

AMY'S fate depended on Mike Crouch, the sweep. The usual search at the station-house, on his apprehension; at the police-court, on his examination before the magistrate; and at Newgate, on his committal for trial, had failed, through his dexterous management, to expose the important document which proved the legitimacy of Amy's mother, and, consequently, her own. Could that paper be conveyed to Smart, it would direct suspicion on Danvers, by showing how much he was interested in her abduction; and thus furnish a clue to her prison.

Without knowing anything of Amy, or of the conspiracy of which she was the victim, the sweep knew from Hawker that something was in progress, and that the issue mainly depended on the proof of Lettice Hargrave's marriage. In such a case he naturally concluded that the best person to hold this evidence was Smart, who had long been connected with the family, and was perhaps concerned in the result: and though incessant contact with crime had blunted his finer instincts, there was still sufficient leaven of human kindness in his nature to enlist his sympathy on the side of Smart, from whom he had received benefits, in preference to that of Hawker, who had first seduced him from the path of virtue, and was the indirect cause of his present incarceration. He was, therefore, prompted to interfere by the double influence of gratitude and revenge;

while, on the other hand, as he lay in the darkness and solitude of his dungeon, and recalled the tenor of his past life, he felt a sort of pleasure in reflecting that he might yet do one good act, which would be some set-off to so much wickedness.

But how was he to communicate with Smart? There was the difficulty; for though he might obtain permission to write to him, the business could not be mentioned in correspondence, as all letters were read by the authorities of the prison; and it was not likely that Smart, with his multifarious engagements, would come expressly to London to see him, on his mere solicitation. There was but one mode of carrying out his wishes; and that, the most congenial to his taste, was by escaping from the gaol. But escape appeared next to impossible. The window of his cell was at a considerable height, and even if it could be reached, was bedded deep in the wall, secured by iron bars, and opened into a yard constantly overlooked by turnkeys from the windows of the opposite wing. His only chance was by the door, and his ingenuity hit upon a mode of operating, by which he hoped to succeed. At eight o'clock, a turnkey brought him his breakfast, and found him prying into a little hole at the foot of the wall.

"What have you got there," he demanded, keeping between the sweep and the door, so as to bar egress.

"My rat," replied Mike.

"A rat! I didn't know there was one in this part of the gaol."

"If you just stoop down, you'll see one, then, and a whopper too."

The turnkey stooped accordingly, when the sweep leaped over his back, and at one bound cleared the cell, and pulled the door behind him, locking it on the outside,

the turnkey on entering having left his keys in the lock. He instantly began kicking against the door, and calling for assistance; but the situation of the cell, in the outer wing, which was only inhabited by prisoners, was remote from succour, and some delay must occur before the noise would be heard. Encouraged by this expectation, the sweep hastily traversed the passage from which the cell opened, and reached a door, which the gaoler's keys enabled him to unlock. This led into a yard, directly facing an iron grating, where, on visiting days, the prisoners were permitted to converse with their friends; and the whole space was commanded by two windows, under the constant surveillance of a turnkey. It was scarcely possible, therefore, that he could pass out without being discerned; but as the risk could not be diminished by hesitation, he drew back the door and glided forth.

He walked boldly across the quadrangle to a corner, on the same side as the grating, never raising his eyes to see if he were observed. He had already formed his plan, which was to clamber up the face of the gaol, and escape over the roof. The building, forming the four sides of the yard, was upwards of fifty feet high, and was constructed of blocks of granite rough faced, and indented in the courses, thus affording an interstice for the foot. The sweep backed into the angle, thrust his toe into a course of the wall on each side, and then compressing his body, as if mounting a chimney, gradually raised himself. The process was slow, and, from the tension of the muscles, extremely painful. As he ascended, the strain became greater, and the risk increased. But never relaxing his efforts, he rose higher and higher, balancing himself, as he stood in mid air, with admirable dexterity. At this crisis, a turnkey entered the yard, and he was obliged to remain perfectly still, as the

least movement would have betrayed his situation. Reaching the middle of the area, the turnkey stopped, and turned round. It was a miracle he did not look up; and the sweep, while repressing his breath, fully expected discovery. But the gaoler was not so observant. He appeared to have forgotten something, and after a search in his pockets, hurried back by the way he had entered. This afforded the sweep a respite, enabling him to resume his ascent; but his muscular strength, extraordinary as it was, began to fail; and when near the summit, he quivered in every fibre, so that it seemed impossible to preserve his balance. He was just falling, when he made a clutch at a bar overhead, forming a part of the chevaux de frise, which struck out horizontally from the coping, as a guard for the roof; and, by a prodigious effort, he swung himself up, turning completely over on to the top of the bars. In this awful situation, at a height of nearly sixty feet from the ground, with his head hanging down, his back bent over the spikes, and his whole weight resting on two slender rods, he found himself compelled to pause from absolute exhaustion. But the vibration of his supports intimated that delay was death, and collecting his strength, he forced over his head, and threw himself back on the coping. The roof was gained.

He stretched his sore limbs on the leads with an indescribable sense of relief. But there was still work to be done; and the success he had achieved with so much labour and risk, urged him to proceed. He crept along the channel till he reached the further parapet, when he met with an unexpected obstacle. This was a chasm of seven feet, occupied by the prison tank, more than forty feet below. At once he conceived the daring step of leaping across. To miss would be certain death, as his head in falling must

necessarily come in contact with the stone wall, and be broken to powder; and in any case he must be drowned in the deep water of the tank. But what was death to the convicted felon! With one fearful bound he sprang from the parapet, his breath suppressed, his teeth set, his whole frame braced up. His feet lighted on the opposite coping with a convulsive shock. His brain whirled round, he reeled over the chasm, but, with a last effort, contrived to keep his footing. He then crossed the leads, and clambered on the roof of the next house, where an attic window, which was wide open and easy of approach, invited him to enter.

The room was untenanted, and the sweep helped himself to some clothes which were lying about, leaving his prison garb in exchange. The next thing was to reach the street. He had so sprained his foot, that it was with difficulty he raised it from the ground; but, by degrees, he made his way to the stairs, and then straddling over the bannister slid without noise to the bottom. He heard voices in the rooms, but no one came out, and he arrived unmolested in the street.

Behind, the gaol was all in confusion; and the news quickly spread that a prisoner had escaped.

CHAPTER LVII.

THE WAGES.

THE day was fixed for Eleanor's marriage, and Danvers had just returned from the jeweller's, where he had been ordering a bridal gift, when he found on his table a letter from Rosalie. With a gesture of impatience he tore it open, and learnt she was aware of his approaching nuptials.

She did not reproach him, she did not even allude to her own claim upon him; and the degradation and wretchedness in which he had plunged her; but, though uttering no complaint, she expressed, in resolute terms, her firm determination to prevent the marriage, by making a representation to Sir Blundell, and thus save him from the guilt, and Eleanor from the misery of such a union.

Another man would have been confounded by this incident, but Danvers, as far as outward appearances went, met it composedly. He had hoped to keep Rosalie in ignorance of the event, till it was too late for her to interfere; but now that she was apprised of it—how he could not imagine,—he could not hope to overcome her opposition. Hence there was but one course for him to pursue, and that was, *to remove her out of the way.*

The dark thought was not the fruit of deliberation, but came into his mind at once, by instinct—a direct suggestion from the Spirit of Evil. His imagination recurred to the stile on the verge of the cliff, where the idea had first struck him. That was the spot for the deed, if he could

meet her there unobserved, and without its being known he was in the neighbourhood. As a more certain mode he would have preferred poison; but *two deaths in one house*, and at the same time, might excite suspicion, while here the body might never be found, and even if it were, it would create the impression of suicide. Besides, the secret would be confined to his own breast, and he liked not to employ an accomplice when he could act for himself.

Rosalie, meanwhile, was more deeply wounded by his defection than she suffered to appear. Aroused to the horror of her situation, shocked, and penitent, she had, as has been shown before, resolved to break off their connection, and fly from his roof, but was detained by her solicitude for Amy. Yet, spite of this resolution, and her steadfast purpose never to see him again, she could not receive the conviction that the man she had so tenderly loved, and for whom she had sacrificed so much, was faithless and heartless, without an additional pang; but that past, she thought no more of herself—no more but as of one cast out of the pale of society, of religion, and of the law. Her only thought was how to prevent this marriage, which would consign Eleanor, once so hated, but to whom her stricken heart now turned in affection and remorse, to a doom so horrible. That she would do at all risks, and then depart.

The reply of Danvers to her appeal was couched in the terms he so well knew how to use. His conduct, he admitted, appeared strange; but could she doubt his affection after the repeated proofs of it she had received? He would come to her directly, and a word would explain his proceedings, and free him from suspicion. It was, however, of the greatest importance that no one should be aware of his visiting Seaford, and he had special reasons for concealing

it from Mary Gorham; therefore he entreated her to steal out of the house unobserved, on the following evening, about ten o'clock, and meet him at the stile on the cliff, where they had stopped on their way down, and where, if she would listen to reason and to love, she would be satisfied that herself, and she alone, was the undisputed mistress of his heart.

Rosalie could hardly read the billet for tears—tears they were of mingled credulity and misgiving; credulity in his love; misgiving, which she could not repress, as to his probity. But her purpose to part from him was unshaken. Her repentance, if quick, was sincere, and with this last meeting she would tear herself away for ever.

Amy had fallen into a gentle sleep, which rendered it less difficult to leave her; and as the appointed hour drew nigh, Rosalie stole forth, taking care not to be observed by Mary Gorham. But there was one eye she could not elude: it was Cæsar's; and as she was gliding from the porch, the noble dog flew out, and bounded on before her.

She was glad of such a companion, who might, if need required, be a protector. She had not gone far, indeed, before this need seemed to arise; and a man who had been skulking about the ruined lodge, ran against her, almost pushing her down, but as the dog pounced upon him, he blurted out an apology, and made off. The man was Hawker.

Rosalie was a little startled by the incident, but stopped to pat Cæsar's head, and then, with recovered confidence, hurried forward. The night was fine, though dark, so that she could hardly see her way; and climbing the rough path over mounds and cavities, she stumbled at every step. But, at length, the heights were attained, and she walked along the brink of the cliffs towards the stile.

Far below, the sea rushed in among the rocks; and though, at such a depth, its white foam was covered by night, and could not be discerned, the voice of the breakers made itself heard, crying out to the mighty rampart of earth that the waves were coming on, and would one day wash over it. Rosalie shuddered at the sound, without understanding its import. And that vast area, of which she could see nothing—that vacuum, that gulf of darkness and solitude, was too like her own fate to be contemplated unmoved!

It all fell upon her together—darkness, solitude, rushing waves, deepening the gloom and loneliness of her soul. On the dark sea of her future she could see no shore.

A growl from Cæsar disturbed her reverie, and turning, she was terrified to behold a man close at her side. He was so muffled up, that, at first, she did not recognise Danvers; but his voice, as he pacified the dog, betrayed him.

"You have come!" she said, in a troubled tone.

"Yes."

The curt answer, in keeping with his sudden appearance, his disguise, the lonely place, and the hour he had selected for their meeting, heightened her terrors. The moment, indeed, had come, when Danvers could throw off his mask—when the passions at work in his breast would no longer permit it to be worn.

"Oh, Danvers! is this the way you speak to me?" she cried, in convulsive accents.

"What do you mean?," he said, fiercely. "You want to make a slave, as you have made a fool of me. You are to rule all my actions. I mustn't do anything—I mustn't speak or look, but as it may please you."

"Have I asked this?"

"In effect, if not in words. You are a curse and a pest to me!"

"I am bad, indeed! Yes! I have led you into sin, as I am steeped in it myself. Yet, Danvers—dear to me still, dear for ever"—and the poor creature sank at his feet—"by the love you once felt, forgive me! I have come to see you but this once, and then I will no more embarrass you. I wish only to speak to you of this marriage—of Eleanor."

"What have you to do with Eleanor? She wouldn't look at such as you, if you were to meet her. She'd think herself contaminated by your presence."

"Contaminated!" said the fallen woman, with a cry. "Yet it is true—true!"

"You don't understand your position. You and society are severed for ever."

"I know it, Danvers—for ever, though it sounds cruel from your lips. But this marriage would be another weight on my conscience. I entreat you not to contract it."

"Woman!" said Danvers, through his teeth, "what frenzy has seized you? Do you think I'll be balked in the most important act of my life by your miserable whims? Do you think I am bound eternally to your car? Awake from your delusion! I hate you."

"Hate!" The ground seemed to open beneath her, the cliffs to rise over her head, the dark sky to whirl round and round.

"Yes, hate! You have been my bane, and wish to be my ruin. But you shan't!—you shan't!"

And he grasped her round the waist, and was pushing her over the cliff, but she clung round him.

"Leave go!" he muttered, in a hissing voice, "or I'll—"

"Danvers, dear Danvers, stop!" she said, convulsively. "Let me die, but not by your hand. Gracious Heaven!—"

There was a cry of agony and despair, and her body fell headlong down—down on the jagged rocks and rushing surf, breathless, senseless, dead!

The murderer drew back from the brink, as if afraid of falling himself: then he stood still, gasping, riveted to the spot. He was aroused by a loud bark from the dog. Cæsar, as Rosalie disappeared, ran wildly along the edge of the precipice, looking over into the abyss; and before Danvers could interpose, jumped on a ledge beneath, and disappeared.

Danvers was afraid the noise might attract attention. Glaring round he saw something dark at a little distance. Was it a human figure or a tree? He moved towards it, and the object, whatever it was, receded. He ran forward, and it was gone.

But, though uncertain whether he had been observed, he was startled, and remembered it was dangerous to loiter. Accordingly, he hurried away, making for a small copse next the road, where he had left his horse. As he was emerging from the trees, he heard a step, and was drawing back, but before he could do so, a man confronted him, and threw the light of his lantern on his face.

"Now, sirrah, let me go by," cried Danvers, averting his head as he recognised one of the fishermen from the village.

"Beg pardon, master," replied the man, with a hard look at him; "but I thought somebody cried out. Didn't you hear 'em?"

"No!" said Danvers.

And mounting, he galloped off.

Away he flew, giving the horse free rein, and plying

whip and spur without interruption. He had designed to reach the railway by midnight, when he would meet the train, and be in town by morning. There, according to his old tactics, he would immediately show himself in public, so as to be able to prove an *alibi*, if circumstances should arise to render it necessary; and thus he hoped to be prepared for anything that might happen.

His horse was flaked with foam as he entered the railway-yard. The train was up; and a porter, taking the rein as he alighted, led the dripping steed to the truck, while Danvers secured his place in the carriage.

"He's a nice 'un, I don't think!" observed another porter, looking after him. "And what a pickle his nag's in!"

"Yes," said the other. "He's been up to no good in that rig-out. After some mischief, I'll be bound."

"Do you know him, then?"

"I ought to. I was in the regiment with him three years."

"And who is he?"

"He was Captain Danvers then. I believe he's got a new handle to his name now, but I can't say exactly."

The train moved off.

"So far, well," murmured Danvers, stretching himself in the carriage. "The thing's done, and I've not been seen."

CHAPTER LVIII.

MURDER WILL OUT.

FOILED of his plunder at Nampced House, and alarmed by the capture of the sweep, Hawker found the temperature of London disagreeably warm, and thought it would be beneficial to rusticate for a time in the provinces. Chance brought him once more to Gainsford, and here his attention was attracted by a poster, announcing the abduction of Amy, and offering a reward for any information concerning her. He had just finished the perusal of the notice, when, looking round, he discerned Lawyer Smart, and he instantly beat a retreat.

The lawyer, whose weird eye was ever alert, had caught sight of him, but Hawker's movements were so prompt, that he easily eluded pursuit. Smart, however, thought the circumstance of sufficient importance to be communicated to Harold and Brookman, particularly as the latter, despairing of success in the country, had just gone to London, hoping to obtain some clue to Amy in the metropolis. Accordingly, he telegraphed the fact, recommending that they should seek the aid of some expert police-officer to follow Hawker's steps, and try to discover his lair.

Harold had just received the message, and was pondering what course to take, when the servant ushered in Brookman. The poor Chartist was so altered, that Harold scarcely recognised his former friend. He pressed his hand in silence, unable to disguise his emotion.

"You've heard he's been seen," said Brookman. "What do you think should be done?"

"We can do nothing better than apply to the police, as Smart advises," replied Harold. "I know an officer who'll ferret him out, if we can obtain his services."

Brookman shook his head.

"I've sought her everywhere," he said, dejectedly—"night and day, in every place, likely and unlikely; and all to no purpose. Ah! what is the world, what is life to me, if my child is taken from me!"

"Let us still hope," said Harold, soothingly, "though I, like yourself, have searched for her in vain. But I'll never rest till I discover her and deliver her."

"I know what you've done," replied Brookman; "know without seeing. But think what she was to me, Harry!—my treasure, my all! I have reared her like a tender plant, through sickness and hardship and sorrow. I took pride, weak man that I was, in her beauty, which passes away like a breath—in her youth, in her goodness; and truly I lived more in her than myself. Now, she's gone, and I am desolate."

His robust mind, his iron will, indeed, seemed subdued, bent, and shattered. Harold, who could say nothing to console him, thought he might find relief in action.

"We have now something to go upon," he said. "Let us lose no time, but at once see if this ruffian can be traced. We'll set about it together."

Brookman made no objection, and sallying forth, they proceeded in quest of Sergeant Lockyer.

The trusty constable was at his post, and received them with professional politeness.

"The first thing to be done is to make tracks for Gainsford," he said. "We'd better go in company, and,

perhaps, you'll come in useful; for your abilities, sir"—he addressed himself to Harold—"are first-chop. I'll just make a few arrangements, and then I'll start off, and meet you at the railway in an hour."

Harold and Brookman concurred that they should begin their quest at Gainsford, though they had no expectation that Hawker, if he had seen Smart, would remain there. In this impression they were correct; for not only was Hawker desirous to avoid his old master, but he had suddenly struck on a new idea, which directed his steps elsewhere. The poster apprised him of Amy's disappearance; and by whom could she have been carried off but by Danvers?—carried, no doubt, to Seaford Nest, where he was to have taken her himself, had he succeeded in getting her in his power. Could he but ascertain this, he would still have a hold over Danvers, and might extort money from him at pleasure.

Such was the object of his visit to Seaford, where, as has been shown, he arrived at an eventful moment, and was a witness of the murder of Rosalie. But justice, so long evaded, was on his track, bent on his capture. Step by step the wily Lockyer followed him up, never losing the scent, never relaxing the chase. Though naturally more eager, Harold and Brookman were not more keen, and, finally, all three arrived at the fishing-village, within sight of Seaford Nest.

They stopped at a miserable public-house, dignified with the name of inn, which dispensed spirituous comforts to the villagers; and Harold was lingering about the bar, when his ear caught words which seemed to bear on the search. An old woman—who was no other than the coadjutor of Mary Gorham—was talking with the landlady at the door.

"And how do they all get on at the house, Mrs.

Stunt?" asked the hostess. "How's the poor young lady, to-day?"

"She had a most lonesome night—such shriekin', you never heard the like," replied the old woman; "but she seems a little easier now. What's more curious, t'other lady, who hardly ever left her, ain't to be found this mornin', and Ma'am Gorham thinks she's gone back to Lon'on."

"Gone back to Sir Everard Danvers, I suppose," replied the hostess—and Harold thrilled at the name. "He's a strange man—your master, Suke, and these goin's on at the house don't look just right—that's a fact. This poor young lady, too, coming here so mysterious—"

"I beg your pardon," said Harold, interrupting her, "but the subject you are speaking of may have some connection with myself. You mention a young lady, and I am in search of one, who has been stolen away from her friends."

"It ain't like to be this one, sir," replied the landlady. "This is a lady at the great house yonder—Sir Everard Danvers's."

"And that is a servant there, I presume?" said Harold. He looked round as he spoke, but the old woman, fearing she had been somewhat too communicative, had taken advantage of her position to sidle off. "Ah! she's gone."

Hurrying to the door, he saw her wending her way to the water-side, where a little knot of people were huddled together round some object which had washed ashore; and conspicuous in the group was Sergeant Lockyer, who, as Harold appeared, called to him to approach.

"Here's the body of a lady found," he cried, as Harold drew nigh; "but she seems older than the one you want."

Harold felt an involuntary misgiving, he knew not of what. The crowd, as he advanced, parted before him; and he confronted the corpse of Rosalie.

The soft, delicate face was upturned, and was beautiful in death—beautiful, though solemn; inspiring sadness rather than awe. Her long hair fell dishevelled, veiling a fracture at the back of her head, where she had struck against the rocks, but there was no appearance of any other contusion. By the side of the dripping body crouched Cæsar, his drenched coat and exhausted condition denoting the part he had taken in bringing it ashore.

"This is a dreadful sight!" said Harold, pale with emotion and excitement. "Can she have committed suicide?"

"Thrown herself from the cliffs!" said the sergeant.

Here an exclamation broke from the old woman, who had just come up.

"Why, I declare it be the lady from the house!" she cried.

"What house, mother?" asked Sergeant Lockyer.

"There be only one house here, as I know on," answered the crone. "I thought every one knew Seaford Nest."

"It belongs to Sir Everard Danvers, does it not?" said Harold.

The old woman was not fond of questions, and looked up with a scowl; but Harold's appearance, marking him as a superior, mollified her feelings.

"Yes, it do, sir," she answered; "but Sir Everard ain't here now. He seldom comes."

"He was here not long ago, since the lady came," observed Harold, at hazard.

"Well, he was."

"This matter will require investigation," said Harold

to the sergeant. "But the first thing is to remove the body, and I think it should be taken to the house where the lady came from."

"Couldn't do better," replied Lockyer.

The body, accordingly, was raised up, and placed on an improvised bier, formed of oars from the fishermen's boats. Four of the fishermen carried it forward, while Harold and the sergeant walked at the side, and Cæsar came on behind, like a chief mourner, the villagers bringing up the rear. As the mournful procession moved along, it was met by Brookman.

"Here is a tragedy," said Harold. "But you don't know who it is. You never saw Lady Haughton."

"And is this her body?"

"Yes."

For a moment Harold could say no more, but he had grasped Brookman's arm, and they walked on together.

"We're taking the corpse up to that great house," he said, at length. "I hear there's a young lady there, who arrived very mysteriously. Do you think it can be Amy?"

"Amy!" faltered Brookman.

"It might be. We've traced Hawker to this place, and here we lose him. Might he not be in league with the owner of that house?—a man, I know, capable of any baseness!"

"It is possible; but, if so, what can have been the fate of my child?" He raised his clenched fist with a desperate gesture: then rushed forward, as if distracted, passed the ruined lodge, and never stopped till he reached the mansion. Harold followed, with difficulty keeping up with him.

CHAPTER LIX.

THE PATHS OF PEACE.

"You look weary this morning," said Mary Gorham, as she found Amy lying awake in bed; "but you had a sad night."

"Ah! I disturbed you," replied Amy, languidly. "I'm so sorry, but the pain was so great, I screamed without thinking of it."

"Well, never mind. It's over now, and here is something to soothe you." And she presented a draught. "You'll feel refreshed directly you take it."

Amy accepted the glass, and the housekeeper supported her in her arms, while she drank its contents. It did seem to rally her, though she fell heavily on her pillow.

"Ah! now you're better," said Mary Gorham. "But you must remain very quiet. Is there anything you'd wish to have?"

"I should like—I should like to see Lady Haughton, if it wouldn't trouble her too much."

The housekeeper averted her head.

"She's not in," she replied, in a constrained tone. "In fact, she's gone."

"Gone altogether?"

"Yes."

"I wish I had bid her good-bye," said Amy. "But it can't be helped." She was now silent, but her patient, resigned, enduring look was more expressive than words.

That was a sight the housekeeper, impassive though she was, could not meet, and she retreated from the room. Amy relapsed into her own thoughts—thoughts that comforted, though they were sad—sad, that is, to worldly minds, but not to hers. She was ready. Life, which she felt to be closing, could give her nothing; for it had parted her from those she loved, and without them it was a void. In the spring of youth, in the flower of her beauty, she had learnt the emptiness of earth's vanities, in the disappointment, the utter prostration, the blight of her tenderest feelings. What was the grave to her but a bed, easier, softer, smoother than couch of down!

Suddenly she heard a strain of music, stealing so softly on the air that it seemed a part of it, an atmosphere of melody. Say it was a delusion, an effect of imagination; it still beguiled her mind, even elevated her soul—elevated it from earth to heaven, from man to God. And—strange as it may sound—there are those who believe that such music is played by angels.

Yet, in one sense, death was a trial—the separation, the eternal parting, leaving those she loved to bear the whole heavy burden of life unshared and alone! Yet not so; for they would be in the hands of God. Enfeebled by sickness, worn in body and mind, and still only a child, she would but impose upon them an additional anxiety and trouble. How selfish, then, to wish to live! What mercy to take her away! Could she, indeed, but see them again —see her father and Harold! But now it could not be; for her hours, her moments were numbered. Yet what voices were those? what steps? They came near, nearer, nearer. They were at the door, in the room. THERE! "Harold?—father! dear, dear father!"

"My child! my dearest Amy!"

They each held one of her hands, but they did not speak. They saw the time was at hand—that death, with his invisible javelin, was in the room. Amy's glazed eye seemed to regard them both at once, as, with a dying effort, she murmured—

"We shall meet——"

When, dear Amy? Alas! thy lips are silent; thy light is put out; thou art dead, Amy!

CHAPTER LX.

REAPING THE WHIRLWIND.

Had the project of Danvers been carried out? Was Amy, so gentle, so unoffending, the victim of the black art of the poisoner? No! If Mary Gorham had fallen in with, and even almost invited, the wicked design, it was with no intention of putting it in execution. She saw Amy was marked out by another and not less unerring hand. But she knew the character of Danvers; she divined his secret intentions: and she hoped, by seeming to enter into the scheme, to acquire an influence over him, which she might use as circumstances prompted—for the purpose either of intimidation or reprisal.

But it was necessary to be guarded, as she believed that, if he found it desirable to get rid of her, Danvers would not scruple to accuse her of the crime, at some

future period; and would rake up every circumstance that might appear to bear against her. Hence her alarm at Amy's convulsions, after receiving her medicine; and her eagerness to have its effect tested by the doctor. But, instead of injuring, she had, in fact, done her best to relieve Amy, though confident that nothing could save her; and perhaps it was her familiarity with suffering, acquired while a nurse in a London hospital, more than any actual want of natural feeling, that gave such an appearance of sullenness to her ministrations, while those of Rosalie were so watchful and tender.

But now she possessed another hold over Danvers, in connection with the disappearance of Rosalie. She had, unobserved herself, seen her unhappy rival go forth, on the night of the murder; but not till the morning was she aware that she had not returned. Then she found the letter of Danvers, inviting her to meet him, and from its injunction of secrecy, and allusion to herself, immediately suspected foul play. All was confirmed when the party arrived with Rosalie's body.

She accompanied Harold and Brookman to Amy's room; and, as the poor girl breathed her last, gently closed her eyes.

"You have something to answer for here," said Harold, in a low voice, while Brookman, overwhelmed by grief, threw himself on his knees by the bed, and bowed his head on the lifeless body.

"I! for what?" replied the housekeeper.

"Who placed this young lady in your charge?"

"Herself. She asked me for shelter, and I gave it her."

"That you will be required to prove."

"You threaten me! This is the return for my kindness, my attention to her."

"For any kindness you have shown her, I am grateful, and will ever remain so. But a foul wrong has been done. This young lady has been stolen from her friends, and we find her in this house in a dying state—dead! Does not this call for inquiry?"

"She has had a doctor and every attendance," said Mary Gorham. "Ah! the doctor is here now." And as he entered, she added—"The poor thing has gone, sir. But you can bear witness she has not been neglected."

"I can do so, with a safe conscience," replied the practitioner. "Her case was decline, which from the first was hopeless."

He approached the bed, and scrutinised poor Amy's face. Harold, meanwhile, raised Brookman, and drew him away.

"This is a great blow," he said. "It has almost paralysed me; and how much more, you! Yet struggle with it, my friend—still struggle!"

"Yes, Harry, yes!" replied Brookman, seeming not to know what he said.

"We have lost her," pursued Harold, in a troubled voice; "but let us hope it is only for a time, and we know her sorrows are at an end."

"She has gone where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest," answered Brookman. "But let me grieve for her awhile, Harry, and then I shall be more resigned—be able to say, 'Thy will be done!'"

Harold inclined his head.

"But one thing we mustn't neglect, Harry. There's the mother of the poor lady whose body has just been found—poor thing! I judge by myself what her feelings will be; but I'm so taken up with my own sorrow, I'm

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useless to every one. Yet if you'd write to her, and break the matter gently, it would be a good action."

"Can you think of her now, when you are in such affliction yourself? You indeed remind me of my duty. But I don't know how I could communicate such intelligence, unless I were to go to her; and how can I leave you?"

"I will not keep you from such an errand, Harry. Go."

"Be it as you wish. Yet let me first make the arrangements for dear Amy's funeral. This I must undertake."

At the thought of that last office, Brookman, strong man though he was, could not restrain his tears.

"It is what I expected—what I knew you would do," he said. "Settle all, and then depart."

Harold did not linger. The sad duty, which it wrung his heart to contemplate, was speedily concluded, and in a short time he was on his way to town.

At first he was inclined to go to Sir Blundell, as well as Mrs. Addlefield, and apprise him of the tragic end of his wife. He could not but associate the incident with Danvers, and, were that established, it might, if not too late, prevent his marriage with Eleanor. But a little consideration showed him there was no proof of such connection. Rosalie, it was true, had been residing at Seaford, but it did not follow that this was known to Danvers, and, still less, that there was any guilty complicity between them. He might himself be persuaded of the contrary, and consider the facts, which to others would appear slender, confirmation strong; but he was sensible of an instinctive dislike to Danvers, and this might be the effect of prejudice. He was, besides, averse to going to

Sir Blundell's, as it must necessarily place him in a painful situation, as well as recall bitter regrets; and though he would do anything to break off Eleanor's marriage, he felt that, to make such a charge without some substantiatory evidence, would, in his case, appear more like spite than zeal. He determined, therefore, to abandon the idea, and confine his mission to Mrs. Addlefield.

Arriving in town, he drove to May Fair, and presented himself at Mrs. Addlefield's residence. A French servant, the counterpart of Priscille, but of the sterner sex, conducted him to the drawing-room, the same unique apartment which had been the rendezvous of the wedding party on the morning of Rosalie's marriage, and which on every side—walls, tables, and chairs—still exhibited the frivolous tastes of its owner.

Mrs. Addlefield swept into the room in her usual stately style, but her form was not so erect; and the arts of the toilet, which had enabled her to mask the effects of time, failed to disguise the ravages of sorrow.

She started as she discerned Harold.

"Ah! I remember now," she said, looking at his card, which she had brought in her hand. And she sank affectedly, but with real exhaustion, into a fauteuil. "I thought I knew your name. But is there not some mistake—for the servant told me you had come on important business?"

"It is true, I am sorry to say."

"Sorry!" And she looked up in surprise. "The business is disagreeable, then, as well as important. In that case, the sooner it is terminated the better; so pray tell me what it is."

"It refers to Lady Haughton," replied Harold, mournfully.

Mrs. Addlefield's head, raised so proudly, dropped on her breast; and her cheek paled, till the rouge, so fresh and delicate, became a hideous blotch, like the taint of a leper.

"What of her?" she asked, in a faltering voice.

Harold could not bring himself to say.

"You are silent," said Mrs. Addlefield. "Pray do not stand on punctilio; but if you are the messenger of Sir Blundell—"

"Alas, no!" said Harold, interrupting her. "I have now no connection with Sir Blundell."

"Then, you are here on the part of Rosalie?—of—of Lady Haughton?"

"I may say I am."

"You have brought me a message from her? What is it? What has she to say? But I see it is something sad—something dreadful," she continued, regarding him with a fixed gaze. "You may disclose it; for—for I am prepared."

"To hear of her being ill?—dangerously so?"

"You do not tell me all! I see it by your words—in your face!"

"I know not how. But think you have lost her."

"You mean she is dead!" said Mrs. Addlefield, in a sepulchral tone, and passing her hand before her eyes.

"Even so."

They were both silent.

"She appears to have fallen from a cliff," Harold then said, "and been killed on the spot."

A shudder pervaded Mrs. Addlefield's frame; she uttered a cry, and clasped her hands in despair.

"Murdered! murdered!" she exclaimed, convulsively. And Harold felt his heart turn.

"Can it be possible?" he cried. "I never thought of that. And now I do think of it—now you mention it—it seems to me unlikely; for death appears to have resulted either from accident or suicide."

"That shall be clearly established," said Mrs. Addlefield, with a calmness and deliberation that surprised Harold, and seemed to give dignity to herself. "Tell me where the body was found, and all the circumstances, and then I shall know how to act."

Harold related the facts, and she listened attentively to the end, without interrupting him, though once or twice, when he mentioned the name of Danvers, her changing features showed she was deeply agitated.

"It is as I supposed," she remarked, as he concluded; "and again I say my daughter has been murdered. Now, sir, listen to me. I may not have deserved a service at your hands, but you have come to me in a kind spirit, and I think you will lend me what help you can in unravelling this tragedy."

"Of that be assured."

"I thank you, and rely upon you. Indeed, apart from your humanity, you may take an interest in it on personal grounds; for the murderer of my child is the affianced husband of Eleanor Haughton."

Harold started.

"It may be," he said, thoughtfully; "but we have no proof of it—no evidence; and it is such a terrible crime, that, bad as he may be, it is difficult to believe him capable of it."

"I see I am mistaken in you," said Mrs. Addlefield. "I thought you loved, and that your love was centred on Eleanor Haughton."

"And you thought right—only love is a feeble word to express my feelings. But all that is over now."

"You love her no longer?"

"For ever I shall love her—as long as my pulse beats, or my heart can feel."

"Yet you would see her become the bride of this man—this monster, stained with the blood of her father's wife; for as sure as you stand there—as sure as I now breathe and speak—Danvers has killed her."

"Should it be so, Eleanor's fate would indeed be terrible!" exclaimed Harold, with an appalled look. "But it needs not this consideration to induce me to give you every assistance, and render you every service in my power. If such a foul murder has been committed, it shall be brought to light!"

"I will go at once, and accuse him of it, face to face," cried Mrs. Addlefield.

"No, no!" said Harold. "We must act more warily, and appear to have no suspicion. This, if he be really guilty, will throw him off his guard, while we are secretly following his traces, and collecting information. Within the last few days one of his emissaries was in Seaford. Against him we have another charge on which he can be apprehended; and, when he is in custody, he may throw some light on this catastrophe."

"You advise well, and I will follow your counsel. Yet I can hardly restrain my feelings, knowing the destroyer of my daughter is exulting in his success, and to-morrow will possess the object he has sought."

"To-morrow!" said Harold, with suppressed breath.

"Yes. The marriage is then to take place."

"That leaves us little time, indeed—too little, to obtain any evidence. If your suspicions are correct, Eleanor will become the wife of a murderer! Would we could say something to defer the marriage! But, no! that would be

unjust and cruel, when, after all, the man may be innocent. Ah! I know you are convinced of the contrary, and, I confess, you have almost convinced me; but, for the present, our lips must be sealed. Let us now have done with words, and proceed to action. We shall be too late to save Eleanor, but not to punish him."

"For that I will incur any fatigue, any expense. To that object I devote all my energies, and, if need be, the remainder of my life. I have but one thing to think of—but one thing to live for—REVENGE!"

"Let us rather say justice," said Harold, solemnly. "And now we will consider how we should act."

Their conference lasted but a short time, when Harold took his leave, hastening to carry out the measures they had resolved on.

CHAPTER LXI.

THE SECRET CONTRACT.

MARY GORHAM had arrived in town by the same train as Harold, though neither was aware of the other's presence. They had travelled all night; but the housekeeper, intent on her errand, made no pause to recruit herself at the hotel; but, engaging a cab, was driven straight to Paper Buildings. She alighted at an open door, the jamb of which was inscribed with a roll of names, beginning with "GROUND-FLOOR, MR. SILVERLOCK."

A door within repeated the information, displaying the lawyer's name in black paint on its panels; but how to obtain access was a problem, as there was neither bell nor knocker. But, looking round, Mary Gorham at length discovered a bell, dangling loosely against the wall, and she sounded a peal, which brought up an old woman from some bottomless pit below.

"Is Mr. Silverlock in?" she inquired.

"In!" said the portress, with the civility characteristic of the keepers of lawyers' dens. "You don't expect him to be out this time o'day, do you? He's in bed, if that's what you mean."

"That is what I mean. Will you tell him there's a lady wishes to see him on urgent business."

The peremptory tone somewhat cowed the portress, and muttering, "I never!" she opened the lawyer's door with a latch-key, and disappeared within, closing the door

behind her. Presently she returned, and bade the visitor enter.

"You're to wait here," she growled; and without further explanation, left Mary alone in the room.

The housekeeper sat down, looking as cold and imperturbable as ever, and, withal, blank as the dingy paper and faded furniture on which her eye rested, without seeming to observe. The tin deed-boxes, marked with their owners' names,—the old book-case, full of tomes on the laws, standard works when Silverlock was a student, but now, thank heaven! obsolete as the statutes of which they treated—the almanack over the chimney-piece, successively attracted her glance, but not her attention. Suddenly she heard a step in the adjoining room, and for a moment the cold face seemed stirred like a troubled pool: then all was again smooth, and Mr. Silverlock entered.

"You don't remember me, sir?" said Mary Gorham, looking him full in the face.

"No," replied the lawyer, yet with an undecided air. "Your features seem familiar, too—but indistinct."

"You remember Alice Rivers?"

The lawyer changed colour.

"I am her daughter."

"You!" said Mr. Silverlock, agitatedly. "Are you little Mary? whom I saw but a few years ago—it can't be seven—a blooming girl, a child! And your mother, where is she?"

"She is dead."

"Dead!" And the lawyer's lip quivered. The characters of nature, after all their friction with the world, were not yet effaced from the parchment of his breast. There was still a touch of romance in his withered feelings; and at the name of Alice Rivers, whom he had loved, and

by whom he had been jilted, they quickened and throbbed again.

"How did she die?" he asked, in a faltering voice.

"Of a broken heart."

"And who was the cause of that?"

"I was."

"You! her own child!"

"Yes. I ran away with an officer, who promised to marry me, and he broke his word."

"The villain!"

"That brought my mother to the grave."

"She shall yet have justice, and so shall you. Whoever this man may be, if he gave you such a promise, the law shall make him keep it, or pay the penalty."

"It may seem too late now, when years have elapsed, yet it is on this very subject I am come to you. This morning I am going to this man's house. It is possible he may yield to my appeal, and make me his wife; it is just as probable that he may seek to get rid of me by violence. Now I wish you to send some one, who will see me enter the house; and if I do not come to you by ten o'clock to-morrow, these papers"—and she produced a sealed packet—"will tell you my fate, and enable you to avenge me."

"If you incur any danger, why go on such an errand? Why not resort to the safer action of the law? But I see you are decided, and, perhaps, you judge correctly: so I won't oppose your plan. If my clerk has arrived, he shall go with you to the house, and our further interference will depend on circumstances."

The clerk, who toiled in an adjacent chamber, had just come, and, receiving Mr. Silverlock's instructions, he accompanied Mary Gorham to the cab, and they drove off.

Danvers was lounging over his breakfast when she was

announced. As she entered the room, their eyes met; for each regarding the other as a criminal, sought to trace the impress of crime, the moral brand, on the other's face. Mary Gorham's offered no such revelation; but there was a restlessness in Danvers's gaze that indicated mental disquietude.

"What's brought you here?" he demanded. "What is the matter?"

"She's gone," replied the housekeeper.

"And what's that to me? She isn't here, and I know nothing about her. You must be an idiot to come to town for such a trifle."

"You told me to let you know."

"I! I never want to hear of her again—never! I was as weary of her as her husband."

"Ah! you're thinking of Lady Haughton."

"To be sure, whom else?"

"I was speaking of the young girl, Amy Brookman."

"Oh!" drawled Danvers, frowning and biting his lip. And sensible that he had committed himself, he resolved, as a precaution against treachery, to wrest an admission from his visitor.

"You've poisoned her, then?" he added, with his gloomy smile.

"Of that I am blameless. You have brought me low, but I am not so debased as you think. The poison you gave me is untouched, and, if called for, can be produced."

"You tell me this to my face! But it matters not, since the girl is dead—only I owe you so much the less."

"So much the more, rather, as I have saved you the burden of another murder."

Danvers turned upon her with the glare of a tiger.

"Woman! devil! what do you mean?" he cried.

"You know."

"And you!—you know too much."

"I'll tell you what I do know, and then you can judge. You're aware of Lady Haughton's disappearance, and I may now inform you her body has been discovered, and brought to Seaford House." Danvers grew paler. "It is thought," continued Mary Gorham, "that she committed suicide, but yesterday I found your note, inviting her to a secret meeting on the cliffs. At the time you appointed I saw her steal out of the house, and she never returned."

"And you have my note?"

"Yes."

"Then give it to me." And he rose up.

"Keep your seat," replied his visitor, "or, if you come nearer, I'll call for help."

"You're easily alarmed. We've been good friends before now, and can remain so, unless you are bent on a breach. But so much excitement has made you nervous; and this room, too, is close. Here is something that will revive you." And he took up a vinaigrette.

"I know what it is—it's chloroform," said Mary Gorham, receding. "But, before you use it, understand that I haven't the paper about me. It's sealed up with another, stating I have come to you this morning, and the object of my visit; and the packet is in the hands of a lawyer, Mr. Silverlock, whose clerk came with me to your door and saw me enter. Should I not rejoin him by a certain time, the packet is to be opened and the contents read. Now, do with me what you dare."

"You're a fiend!" said Danvers, sinking into his chair.

"And are you spotless?" she replied, as she also resumed her seat.

"You have come to me for money. Name your price and you shall have it."

"My price is not money. When you took me from my home—when for you I became an outcast—it was not with gold you lured me; but with falsehood, perjury, and fraud. And now you can make me but one reparation, and I have but one price. It is marriage."

"Marriage—and with you!"

"Even with me," replied Mary, with flashing eyes. "But decide for yourself—the altar or the halter!"

Danvers had already decided. The discovery of Rosalie's body, which he had never anticipated, would necessarily lead to an inquest; inquiries would be made; and here was the only witness who could associate him with the deed. By marrying her he would exclude her evidence, even should she prove refractory, as the law, by a considerate provision, precluded a wife from appearing against her husband.

"If I accede to your proposal, the marriage must be kept secret," he said.

"For how long?" replied Mary.

"Only for the present. I can't fix a period, but it shall be a short one."

"I know your reason. To-morrow you intend to marry Miss Haughton."

"Admitted. But what is it to you whom I marry to-morrow, provided I marry you to-day."

"To-day! it is impossible."

"Why so? We can be married up to twelve o'clock, so that we have nearly two hours before us. If there are any difficulties gold will remove them, and promptitude must do the rest. Are you ready?"

"Perfectly."

"Then, let us go. At the corner of the street we can take a cab, and drive to Doctors' Commons, where we will procure a license; and shall then require only a ring and a priest."

They left the house together. A cab, which happened to be driving past, picked them up, and bore them rapidly to their destination.

Mary stopped in the vehicle, while Danvers, penetrating a dark passage, entered the office of a proctor. Stating his object, he was ushered into the presence of a smart young blade, wearing a collegiate gown and cap, who tendered him the oath, and laughed and talked with a friend, while Danvers repeated the solemn words. He then pocketed his feé of sixpence, which Danvers threw down with contempt; and the license, taken in his real name, but suppressing his title, was forthwith issued.

The incident, with the drive into the City, had consumed more time than Danvers had anticipated, so that it was now very near the canonical hour, and they had still to procure the ring. But, once arrived at a goldsmith's, this was easily provided, and nothing remained but to perform the ceremony.

It wanted but a few minutes to twelve when the cab stopped at a church, standing sequestered in the midst of the City. Leaping out, Danvers learnt from an old woman who was sweeping down the steps, that the clergyman was in the vestry, and thither he conducted his bride.

The clergyman and the clerk were just coming forth as they presented themselves.

"We have come to be married," said Danvers. "May we, sir, beg your good offices?"

"A marriage without notice, and strangers!" replied the clergyman. "Impossible."

"There can surely be no difficulty, when we have a license," said Danvers to the clerk, slipping a bank-note into his hand.

"Oh, if you've got a license, sir, it's all right," replied the clerk.

But the clergyman seemed to hesitate.

"This is an extreme case, sir," said Danvers, addressing him apart. And he added, with a ready lie, "We leave by the Hamburg steamer this afternoon, and if you do not perform the ceremony, we shall go unmarried. The responsibility will rest with you."

"But there is not time," said the clergyman, with a glance at the clock.

"Let us try."

The clergyman yielded, and the bride, who stood perfectly silent, as if no way interested in the proceedings, was led up to the altar. Danvers looked round, to make sure there was no one in the church, and felt satisfied by the survey. But as the solemnity progressed, he heard the door open and shut, and, darting a glance behind, thought he saw an object, like a man's head, recede behind a pillar. But, looking again and again, he persuaded himself it was a delusion, and the marriage proceeded.

As Danvers watched the pillar, the clergyman and clerk, if not the bride, kept their eyes on the clock. The hour drew nearer; the great hand of Time moved on; the last minute had come; the bell began to strike; it was twelve o'clock.

But the ceremony was completed; and Mary was Lady Danvers.

They left the church together, but at the corner of the street exchanged a few words, and parted in different directions.

CHAPTER LXII.

THE UNBIDDEN GUEST.

Sir Blundell and Eleanor had quitted Nampced House; and taken refuge for a time in a furnished residence, suited to their altered circumstances. It was a trial for the baronet; but Eleanor had already accustomed herself to a small domicile, and knew that, if strange to grandeur, it was familiar with comfort. Sir Blundell could not part with his valet, or, rather, the faithful old man would not leave his master; and the establishment, on its new basis, was completed by a servant girl, who proved to be no other than Lucy Flight.

The day had now arrived when Eleanor was to make another change—when she was to pass that wide bourne from which, as from the grave, there is no return. Morning found her awake on her pillow, which was wet with her tears. Since her conversation with Harold, the sacrifice she was to make appeared greater, and its pressure more intolerable. He loved her; and she, while seeming to prefer another, loved him. She could no longer be unconscious of an influence which impressed alike her heart and her imagination, engrossed her thoughts, grasped and absorbed her inmost sympathies. Again she recalled, with tender emotion, a thousand reminiscences of Harold's devotedness, little displays of affection that spoke without words, and, as she owned to herself, had woke at the time an echo in her own breast. She remembered his looks

that, unseen but by herself, had watched hers, had been shaped by hers, and had reflected hers. Then his consideration, his forbearance, his generous silence, when his love, so deep and so sincere, must often have prompted him to speak! It all recurred to her now—now while she was yet unbound—now for the last time!

Must she give him up? must she reject him? Alas! the step, involving so much, was already taken. Her word was pledged; her resolution fixed. Then, why, as the truth flashed upon her, start from her pillow? why that frantic gesture? why that moan of despair? From her sleepless couch she glanced at the costly gifts provided for her nuptials—the spotless silk, the bridal veil, rings, bracelets, and gems:—

> "Yet tears bedew the brilliant eyes of her who there reclines,
> For them in vain the lustre proud of pearl or diamond shines:
> Ah! little recks a restless heart of outward pomp or state!"

So Helen Macgregor * sings of Monima; and so, in truth, might it be said of Eleanor.

She had devoted herself to her father; and, in his desolation and ruin, it seemed a duty. But, perhaps, she was mistaken; for though, in entering into the solemn contract of marriage, we are bound to consider others as well as ourselves, it must still be regarded as a covenant of the heart no less than the lips, and, as such, should receive the heart's suffrage and sanction. But Eleanor gave her hand to one, though her affections were engaged by another.

While the bride was mourning in her chamber, looking with dread to the moment which would seal her fate, the

* Historic Lays and other Poems.

little household rang with preparations for the marriage-feast; and all was bustle and rejoicing. The most active was Lucy, who, indeed, was as much interested as if the wedding were her own, or if not quite—*very nearly almost!* Never before had she reached such a climax of smartness; never had the fly-away cap appeared so lightsome, janty, and aërial; and had the imaginary individual in Australia come home from the diggings at that moment, it is possible that she might have been persuaded, in the trim and humour in which she then was, to take the fatal step herself, and play a principal part in the marriage ceremony.

It was the wish of all that the wedding should be a quiet one; and, consequently, but few guests were invited. Among the number were Miss Agnes Curlew and Mr. Granby Faster.

"Another wedding in the family!" observed the fair Agnes to the beau. "I hope it won't be like the last."

Granby shrugged his shoulders. "This is on a different scale—rather," he observed. "What a come down, and all within a year!"

"It can't be so long ago as that, surely. It must be, too; for I remember I was just thirty-nine, and now I'm ——"

"Ah! I can tell your age. You're forty."

"Well, what a miraculous guess. But apropos of the marriage, what do you think of the bride? Is n't she pale? Lost all her colour, I protest."

"Positively, every vestige."

"She reminds me so of poor Lady Haughton, on the last nuptial occasion." And Miss Agnes Curlew gave a prophetic shake of the head. "There's a report this morning that the poor creature has drowned herself; and

if it's true, I think it's very unfeeling to choose to-day for the marriage."

"It's reversing the old plan, and making the marriage feast furnish the funeral baked meats; but perhaps they haven't heard of it."

"Then, I'll tell them."

"No, no! Positively, that would be too bad—inhuman; for I believe myself it's a ——"

"What?"

"A decided flam—positively!"

Others besides the two associates were struck by Eleanor's dejection during the few minutes of their stay in the drawing-room—dejection which, suffusing every feature, her veil might obscure, but could not conceal Perhaps, it was the more apparent, from being such a contrast to the recovered spirits of Sir Blundell, and the sparkling vivacity of Danvers. But, though she tried to arouse herself, it would not be shaken off; when she wished to speak, her voice failed her; and the gaiety of the little party, the joyous scene, even her own bridal apparel, seemed a mockery of her woe.

The moments yet remaining to her, before she would be summoned to the altar—the little short span between herself and fate—were like the interval betwixt a criminal and his execution. She saw, watched, counted them. As she remembered how they were passing, that the fatal instant was at hand, and had almost come, her heart sank within her; she felt a death-like panic, a whirling, sickening sensation, confusing at once sight, hearing, and reason.

Yes, it was all confusion, like a horrid dream. The figures floated around her, in their gossamer dresses, indivisible and undistinguishable; her ear caught their voices,

the merry jest, the light laugh, the repartee; but, if all were present outwardly, inwardly she saw nothing and knew nothing. They opened the door; they took her hand; then, indeed, she knew and understood.

But a figure came flying up the stairs, and stood in the doorway. He barred their egress; he waved them back; and his voice of thunder, though hurried and breathless, was still distinct:—

"Stop!"

For what? The whole company seemed petrified.

"Sir, what does this interruption mean?" demanded Danvers, with livid lips.

"My dear Mr. Arkworth, what is the matter?" asked Sir Blundell.

"I wish to say a word to you in private, Sir Blundell."

"In an hour's time I will attend to you; but at this moment it is impossible. We are just going to church."

"You will not go there now, Sir Blundell," returned Harold. "This marriage is unlawful, and cannot take place; I have come here to prevent it."

"You!" said Danvers, scornfully, while a buzz of amazement rose around.

"Mr. Arkworth, you must pardon my saying this language is very peremptory, and, coming from you, surprises me," said Sir Blundell; "in fact, is very surprising. I must demand the ground of your interference."

"It is easily stated," replied Harold. "Sir Everard Danvers is married already."

"Liar!" cried Danvers.

"He was married yesterday at the church of St. Lawrence Pountney," continued Harold; "and since he denies the fact, I will produce witnesses to prove it: the

clergyman who performed, and the clerk who attested the ceremony."

He stepped aside, and the two witnesses entered the room.

"You identify him?" said Harold.

"He is the same," said the clergyman. And the clerk concurred.

"This is a conspiracy—a contemptible and vile trick," cried Danvers. "But it will be easy, my dear Sir Blundell, to prove I am maligned; and, meanwhile, the marriage can be deferred."

Sir Blundell inclined his head. Eleanor seemed turned into stone.

"I would have spared you this scene, if Sir Blundell would have heard me in private," murmured Harold. "But though it is harrowing, you are saved."

She made no reply: she could not; for conflicting emotions, now of horror, now of relief, locked her lips. Harold lingered a moment, and then withdrew.

Danvers, too, had disappeared, no one knew when or how. He reached the door, sprang into a carriage—the same in which he was to have borne off his bride, and drove rapidly home.

Had his fortune turned? Had the crooked path, the devious lane, in which he had travelled so smoothly and so long, come to an end? Then it was Time that had beaten him! If he had had but time—could he even gain it now, all would be well. With time he might have married Mary Gorham at some sequestered church in the country, where, unknown and unsuspected, he would have incurred no risk of detection: with time he might have got rid of her. But what could he do when all was to be accomplished in a few hours, and on the same spot? It was this that had ruined him

—yet not ruined, only foiled; for his cards were good yet. He would not throw them up: the game, though it looked adverse, must be played out. His rival was on his track; and as he had discovered the secret marriage, might he not, by the same unerring instinct, be brought to a knowledge of the murder? *There* was a thought indeed! He must see what was doing; he must be present at the inquest; and if the truth came out, or the finger of suspicion were raised, he must meet it as he best could.

CHAPTER LXIII.

THE HEIRESS.

HAROLD and Mrs. Addlefield arrived at Seaford simultaneously with Lawyer Smart, who, with characteristic promptitude, hastened to the spot, on hearing of the events that had occurred. Harold found the lawyer and Brookman together, standing by Amy's bier.

"Poor child!" said Smart, regretfully: "she has had a short career; and, I'm afraid, not a happy one. There's something in her history I can't understand, and which has always puzzled me. Strange she should die in this house!"

"Very," said Brookman, in a hollow voice.

The lawyer started.

"It seems remarkable to me from a particular circum-

stance," he said; "for I was struck with her resemblance to the Seaford family when I first met her, and every time I saw her afterwards. But why does it appear so to you?"

"Because this was the ancient home of the Seafords, and she came of the Seaford stock."

"I thought she had their blood in her veins—I could have sworn it. Was it through her mother?"

"On that side: her grandmother was a Seaford."

"Then she must have been Lettice, old Hugh's daughter!"

"That was her name," said Brookman, with some bitterness.

"Why didn't you tell me this before?"

"There was no reason why I should, and it was nothing to boast of. Poor Lettice was never married."

"You're mistaken. Such a report was in circulation, but I, for one, knew it was untrue; and only yesterday the record of the marriage came into my possession. Here it is." And he produced the leaf of the registry, which the sweep, after a narrow escape from recapture, had contrived to place in his hands.

"I'm glad it is discovered," observed Brookman, "though too late to vindicate her memory."

"And too late to right poor Amy," said Smart, mournfully. "But it is all plain now why she was stolen away, and why she was brought here. The possessor of this house, Sir Everard Danvers, had usurped her inheritance. This mansion, the land as far as you can see, and half-a-dozen manors besides, belonged to her. Amy Brookman was the heir of the Seafords."

"My child!"

"Yes."

Brookman struck his forehead. "I have erred, but not knowingly," he said. "Had I but looked to this—had I but devoted to it half the time, and attention, and energy I have given to other things—it might have been better for her, better for us both."

"You acted for the best," said Harold, hitherto a silent auditor of their conversation. "You may have been mistaken; but your principle and your motives have been good, and this must be your consolation."

"I don't know," replied Brookman. "I fear I have been somewhat too bitter against the great and the rich, thinking they had done wrong to me and mine. Now, in the presence of my dead child, I see the vanity of this strife. I learn that we should seek rather to propitiate than to denounce, to smooth down asperities, to conciliate and persuade. There is no satisfaction in life but to live for one another."

The young man, in the fullness of his sensibility and feeling—the hard lawyer, inured in the ways of the world, and steeled against emotion—were both moved by the tenderness of the sentiment. The situation was indeed one to teach and preach the vanity of human ambition. Here was the fair young girl, the last daughter of an ancient race, who had been richly gifted with beauty, talent, and feeling, lying dead under her ancestral roof—brought to the end of her weary pilgrimage, without ever having known her true position, that the lordly mansion and the broad lands around were her own. Not till she lay in her wooden couch, when the shroud was her robe of state, and the pall her canopy, was the secret discovered, and then her inheritance had passed away, and her name was blotted out.

The sun shone bright as they bore her to her grave—not in the arched vault of the Seafords, but in a secluded

nook of the village churchyard. Gently they laid her down; and those she loved so tenderly, and to whom she was so dear, waited by, watching till the last clod was placed, and the dark pit covered over. Then they turned away, silent, subdued, each nursing his own sorrow, but, through the darkness, seeing a brighter morning, when, as Amy had said, they should meet again.

CHAPTER LXIV.

TRIAL AND JUDGMENT.

No such hope visited Danvers. The future, with its distant awards, never cheered, and never troubled him, because he had no belief in its existence. The Man of the World took his portion on earth: his philosophy was of this life; and in the substance of the present, he despised, if he ever remembered, the shadows of the hereafter. His eyes were blinded to the most glaring facts—that the very earth he had chosen for his heritage, and where his treasure was laid up, was the garden of its Creator; and alike in its depths and on its surface, in its adjustment, stability, and momentum, proclaimed the overruling power of the Almighty. He could regard all this beautiful mechanism, all this prodigal bounty, all this precision and balance, and delicacy of finish, as the work of chance; and himself as a tree or weed, growing up, withering, and passing away. To him there was no mystery in

the architecture of the heavens; and he never looked up, in wonder and awe, at the thousand, thousand suns and systems and universes, sprinkled like dust—like sparks, over the boundless sky, and meditated whence they came, or how, age after age, cycle after cycle, they were sustained in their orbits. He never even entered the closet of his own breast, and glanced round, with scrutinising eye, on that miniature and inner world. There was indeed nothing there he desired to see—nothing but black passions, evil souvenirs, and a dead conscience; for the marvellous intricacy of his structure, the providence of his faculties, sensibilities, and feelings, the mystery of his moral and physical being, and the inscrutable separation yet combination of both, if they ever struck his mind, never attracted his thoughts. Had they convinced, they could not have converted him; and he would still have exclaimed, with the unrighteous man of old—"Tush! God careth not for it."

And did his seared nature feel no qualms, no compunctious visitings? Alas! the time when, still human, its emotions could be awakened, was passed! He had had them blunted as a boy at Eton; deadened in his regiment, by the revolting brutalities of officers' quarters; stifled, crushed, blasted. All his life had been a course of heartlessness and iniquity; and murder, leap as it seemed, was but one step further. There was nothing to start at in a little blood, when he had inflicted on others a thousand stabs, more cruel, if not so fatal. Only if the blood should cry from the ground against him—there was the rub!

But the more he reflected, the more was he persuaded, from the tendency of all the facts, that nothing could be brought forward. The apprehensions he had at first entertained were dispelled, and he felt strong in his own forethought and providence. Still, his determination to be

present at the inquest was unchanged; and, procuring a suitable disguise, he set out for Seaford, prepared to act as circumstances should require.

But he was preceded by one for whom he was *not* prepared. Nature, whose operations are unsearchable, had been roused from its grave in Mrs. Addlefield's breast by the mere suspicion of his crime. The woman of fashion had cast off her slough of vanity, and become the heart-stricken mother, exasperated by the wrongs, and horrified by the fate of her daughter. She came down to Seaford like an avenging spirit, and displayed, in her inquiries and proceedings, an energy and activity that surprised everybody. From morning to night, now in one place, now in another, she pursued her inquisition, and was never wearied, and never discouraged. Harold accompanied her, and was astonished by her perseverance and tenacity of purpose, and, still more, by her tact and adroitness. What was almost as strange, all her excitement had disappeared, and, amidst so much to agitate and distress her, she prosecuted her task with imperturbable composure.

The inquest drew to the village inn every denizen of the neighbourhood, and the room appropriated to the inquiry was perfectly crammed before the jury assembled. Danvers, disguised as a pedlar, made his way in with the rest, but could scarcely proceed beyond the door. His first glance was directed at a table, immediately in front of the coroner's chair, and round which sat Mrs. Addlefield, Harold, and Smart, the three persons whose observation and vigilance he most dreaded. He was struck by the alteration in Mrs. Addlefield's appearance—by her pale face, untarnished by rouge, her look of implacable resolution, and her plain garb of black, void of those trappings which constitute the pomp of woe. Every now and then

she exchanged a few words with Smart, or turned to a man behind her, whose face, as he kept crouching down, Danvers could not see. But he felt reassured by reflection that they could have no clue to his proceedings, and he grew still more confident as he looked at the jury, composed entirely of his own tenantry, and recognised the coroner, a solicitor from a neighbouring town, who was the agent of his estate. This suggested the idea of conveying to him some communication with the view of quashing the inquiry; but, on reflection, he thought it wiser, as things stood so well, not to interpose personally, but leave the influence of his position to work its way, and, in fact, he knew sufficient of the pettifogging character of the coroner to be sure of his adhesion.

The great functionary had hardly taken his seat, when he was addressed by Lawyer Smart.

"It is necessary I should inform you, sir," he said, "that I appear here on behalf of the family of the lady, the circumstances of whose death you are about to investigate. In this capacity I am compelled to ask you to summon an important witness, who refuses to come forward—Mrs. Mary Gorham, now resident at Seaford Nest."

"I've just seen Mrs. Gorham, and she declares she has nothing to say that can throw any light on the inquiry," replied the coroner. "If that is the case, it seems useless to trouble her to come here, which is certainly no place for a respectable female." And he glanced at Mrs. Addlefield.

"I repeat, her presence is indispensable," said Smart, "and I must call upon you to enforce it."

"Very well, sir," said the coroner, sharply. "I shall expect you to show that you have not troubled the lady unnecessarily."

Smart only replied with one of his weird looks, but it silenced the coroner; and as the housekeeper of the lord of the manor, being able to put something in his way, was not a person to serve with a summons, he scribbled off a polite note, stating the necessity of her attendance. This done, evidence was received from a fisherman of the discovery of Rosalie's body, when it was brought on shore by Cæsar; and Smart then called Susan Stunt, the charwoman, to testify to its identity. But the old crone had been properly admonished, and would make no admissions.

"Woman," said Smart, at length, in his sternest tone, "do you dare to pretend ignorance of a fact which you can be proved to have acknowledged? There are persons present who heard you say the deceased was the same lady who had been staying at Seaford Nest."

"You have adduced no evidence to establish this," interposed the coroner; "nor is there any ground for supposing it, except hearsay. I mustn't have you put words into the witness's mouth."

"She said it, I'll take my oath," cried a voice from the crowd, before Smart could speak; and several others concurred.

"Well, an' I did say it, what consarn ha' you wi' it?" cried the old woman, turning on her accusers with a scowl. "You must have your tongues clackin', must ye?"

"You admit she is the same lady?" said Smart.

"You got it out of me, and so I'll own to it," replied the old woman. "But I've had a caution since, and I'll tell you nothing more."

"You've said enough on that subject," returned Smart. "Pray let us know now who has cautioned you."

"Really I can't permit such questions as these to be put,

Mr. Smart," said the coroner. "They're irrelevant to the inquiry, and can lead to no result."

"I wish to show the witness has been tampered with."

"Psha! who is there to tamper with her, and for what purpose? You're making a mystery of a very transparent occurrence. Let us confine ourselves to our duty. A lady falls from a cliff, and is drowned, and all we have to do is to find out how it happened."

"Precisely, sir. But it is my object and my intention to show that the lady did not fall from the cliff, but was thrown from it."

A murmur of horror ran through the room; and Danvers, jammed in the doorway, felt his flesh creep.

"You're making a serious charge, sir," said the coroner, changing colour. "Whom do you accuse?"

"That will be shown by the evidence. Let Edward Hawker be called."

Hawker made his appearance in the custody of Sergeant Lockyer. He looked pale and frightened, as, indeed, he might well be, since he had learnt from Lockyer, on their way down from town, that he was suspected of being implicated in the murder, and that the only way to clear himself was to tell all he knew, or, to use the Sergeant's own words, "make a clean breast of it."

"So we've met again, Mr. Hawker," said Smart, as he presented himself. "We're very old acquaintances now, and you insist on keeping up the connection. We've all got a point, and yours is this. But you have seen the body of the deceased lady?"

"Yes."

"Did you identify it?"

"It's the body of Lady Haughton."

"Oh, you know her! Then when did you last see her alive?"

"On the night of her death."

"The very night! Come, come, I see you're a man of information, and can tell us what's in a millstone. Where did you happen to meet the unfortunate lady?"

"I was entering the lodge at Seaford Nest, when I ran against her; and being quite close, I saw her face."

"Was she alone?"

"Alone—except that she had a dog with her."

"What was the time?"

"About ten o'clock. I heard it strike a few minutes afterwards."

"The lady passed you?"

"Yes."

"And what did you do?"

"I followed."

"Ah! it was a lonely spot, and you thought she might require your services, eh, Mr. Hawker?"

"I thought it was a strange thing, her going out at that time by herself, in such a place, and so I went to see what she was after."

"And what did you observe?"

"I saw her go up on the cliffs, and there she met a man."

A profound silence followed these words; a mingled feeling of horror and expectation seemed to seize every one, holding them breathless; and Danvers, remembering the object he had seen at the moment of the murder, felt that a revelation was at hand.

"Who was that man?" asked Smart, in a stern voice.

Hawker grew pale, and hesitated. "I don't know," he said, at length, with ashy lips.

"Refresh your memory, sir. Had you ever seen that man before?"

"I couldn't see him—I was some yards off, and it was very dark," replied Hawker, rallying.

"And you swear you've no idea who he was. Remember, you are on your oath."

"We don't want ideas," interposed the coroner; "but facts. Did you distinguish the man's face?"

"No."

"Then, keep your ideas to yourself. They're not evidence, and can't be admitted."

"It doesn't matter, sir," said Smart. "We may be able to show who the man was, by and by. Tell me now, Mr. Hawker, what the man did."

"He talked with the lady a few minutes. Then he seized her round the waist, and threw her over the cliff."

Again the murmur of horror rose from every lip.

"And what did you do, Mr. Hawker?" asked Smart.

"The man turned round, and came towards me, and I ran off."

"Just like you, sir. But you may stand down now. By and by you will have to answer for your conduct and for your presence."

"Who's the next witness?" demanded the coroner.

"The next is Mrs. Gorham, who I am glad to see has obeyed your summons," replied Smart.

And Mary was handed forward. Her fine face, partly screened by her veil, was cold and impassable as ever, but it did not escape notice that she was dressed in a style superior to her supposed station, and assumed an air of unwonted dignity. The coroner met her with a polite bow, and ordered a chair to be placed for her.

"You are the housekeeper of Sir Everard Danvers?" said Smart.

"I have charge of his residence called Seaford Nest," was the reply.

"You knew the deceased lady?"

Mary was silent.

"We have it in evidence that she had been residing for some weeks at Seaford Nest, and consequently you must have seen her there," said Smart.

"I have no reason for concealing it, except that it was her wish," replied Mary, haughtily. "She came on a visit to me." Danvers drew a breath of relief. The witness who alone could convict him was on his side; and from a glance she exchanged with the coroner, he saw there was an understanding between them.

"I must remind you that you are on your oath, when I ask if she was brought to Seaford Nest by Sir Everard Danvers," said Smart.

"It is quite immaterial to the present inquiry who brought her there," observed the coroner. "The question is irrelevant."

"I require it to be answered," cried Smart. And applause rose from the audience.

"What does this mean?" exclaimed the coroner, furiously. "If such a manifestation is repeated, the constable shall clear the room."

"I beg every one will be silent," said Smart. "This is a court of justice, not a hustings, and justice must not be interfered with." All was hushed, and he again turned to Mary.

"Once more I say, was not the deceased lady brought to Seaford Nest by Sir Everard Danvers?"

"One would think you wished to implicate Sir Everard," said the coroner. "You must be mad."

"Not on this point," returned Smart.

"I refuse to answer the question," said Mary, decisively, "because it may be made the ground of proceedings in another transaction, and it was the wish of the deceased that her visit to me should remain a secret."

"You're not bound to say anything to criminate yourself," remarked the coroner.

"Very well," said Smart. "I now ask you, on your oath, did not the deceased, on the day of her death, receive a note from Sir Everard Danvers, requesting her to meet him privately on the cliffs at ten o'clock at night—did not you see her leave the house at the appointed time, and did not Sir Everard's note fall into your hands?"

As these questions were successively propounded, Mary's complexion and features gradually changed, till they seemed to become stone. All at once she remembered the packet she had left with Silverlock, and which, in the rapid succession of events, she had neglected to reclaim. As she hesitated, the man who had been crouching behind Mrs. Addlefield stood up, and proved to be Silverlock himself.

"You appear to have forgotten these circumstances," he said, sternly. "But here is your own statement of the facts, and here is the note to the deceased, bearing the initials of Sir Everard Danvers."

"Traitor! you have violated my confidence," exclaimed Mary, with frantic vehemence.

"I opened the packet, according to your instructions, and when I learnt its contents, I communicated with the lady's mother, by whose authority I now appear. You must admit the truth of my statements—of your own."

"I admit nothing; I deny it, and retract it all."

"Remember you are sworn," cried Smart. "If you

speak falsely, you will be a perjurer, and, as such, can be severely punished."

"You wish to entrap me into criminating Sir Everard Danvers," returned Mary, with a passionate outburst; "but you shall not; for he has had no part in this tragedy. What I said in that paper is false—is pure invention, dictated by the spite of a slighted woman."

"You hear she repudiates it all," cried the coroner, excitedly. "Under such circumstances, I can't admit these papers as evidence. They were a privileged communication to the witness's lawyer."

"I put aside the papers," said Smart, "but I insist on answers to my questions."

"And I appeal for protection to the law," said Mary. "A wife cannot be made a witness against her husband."

"A wife!" said Smart.

"Yes; I am Lady Danvers."

A thrill of surprise pervaded the assembly; and again Danvers took courage.

"This is the admission we wanted," observed Smart. "The next witness I shall call is Simon Quick, a railway porter." And as he spoke, the witness stood forward.

"You were formerly a soldier in the Guards?" said Smart.

"Yes."

"Was there an officer named Danvers in your regiment?"

"There was. He was captain of my company."

"You remember his personal appearance?"

"Perfectly."

"When did you last see him, and at what hour?"

"This night week, at eleven o'clock. He reached the station just as the train came up."

"How did he come?"

"On horseback."

"Rode up leisurely, I suppose?"

"No, he came up at a gallop, though the horse was ready to drop."

"And this drew your attention to him?"

"Partly; but I was also attracted by his appearance; as he was closely muffled up, though it was a warm night, and he had a good deal of false hair about his face."

"Surely Sir Everard Danvers might be at the railway station, without its being thought singular," observed the coroner. "There appears to be a strange animus in this case, which I can't understand."

"It will be all clear by and by, sir—clear as day," said Smart. "I have shown that Sir Everard Danvers was within an hour's gallop of the scene of the murder at eleven o'clock; and I have shown the condition of his horse. I will now prove that a man muffled up as described, and having a quantity of hair about his face, was seen on the spot an hour before; that he had a horse; and that a cry of distress had been heard just previously. The jury must draw their own conclusions from this testimony."

The man who had come on Danvers at the copse, just as he brought out his horse, was now called, and bore out all that had been said.

"And you have the audacity to say the person you met on the cliff was Sir Everard Danvers?" said the coroner, with a menacing air.

"I don't know who he were, but I'd know him if I see him; for I held up the lantern, and stared in his face."

"And he was no one you'd ever seen before?"

"No."

"What was he like?"

"Well," replied the witness, slowly, "he was like"—and he looked round on the crowd, when his eye lighted on Danvers. "There he is!" he exclaimed, eagerly. "That is the man!"

It was the work of an instant, and a hundred eyes and hundred hands were turned upon him. But Danvers, in his desperation, had the strength of a giant. He flung them from him; he burst through the wall of assailants, and darted from the house. They were after him, close at his side, but he bounded forward. The shout of execration, the yell of abhorrence, the cry of deadly hate, rang in his ear, and rent the air. He already saw the gibbet rising before him, and the exulting crowd gathered beneath the scaffold. But he would disappoint them. He was on the cliffs, and held his fate in his own hand. Gasping, he reached the stile, the very crag from which he had precipitated his victim; and taking one look down—NOT UP—he cast himself over, and fell headlong on the rock, *breathless, senseless, dead!*

CHAPTER LXV.

WHICH IS THE LAST.

NEARLY two months had passed away, and the remembrance of these tragic incidents was still fresh in Harold's mind, though, by the course of events, he was no longer brought in contact with the actors in them. Disappointed in the flower of life, foiled and thwarted in his dearest ambition, the first hope and object of his heart, he went little into society, but lived a secluded life, having few intimates but Brookman, for whom, by a fortunate chance, he was able to procure an engagement, in a financial capacity, on the journal to which he contributed. They were thus near each other, and were much together.

In a social point of view, Harold's position was greatly improved; for the success of his play and the vigour of his political articles, had acquired for him a reputation, the talisman which, by a touch, converts paper and ink into gold; and he began to reap the harvest of his long toils. But he was not happy: his love for Eleanor, which had been his life and inspiration, was unchanged, and events seemed to have raised an eternal bar between them. Once or twice he had thought of calling on Sir Blundell, but the part he had taken in reference to Danvers, his hindrance of the marriage, and subsequent co-operation with Mrs. Addlefield, must recall disagreeable recollections, and would thus, he thought, be embarrassing to all. Meanwhile, time passed on, and it appeared too late

to pay the visit, even if he could reconcile it with propriety.

In this situation of affairs, he received a letter from Ashleigh, now the husband of Phœbe, reminding him of his promise to make a short stay at Ashleigh Hall, and urging him to fulfil it. He was well disposed to agree; his engagements, though numerous, admitted of a short absence from town; and the next morning he set out.

A rapid journey brought him to his destination, when, alighting at the Hall, he found that the gentlemen were all out shooting, but the servant conducted him to the reception-room, where Mrs. Ashleigh, as Phœbe was now designated, was reported to be. As he entered, there was indeed a lady seated in the room, with her back to the door, but she turned round as he advanced; and he discovered, not Phœbe, but Eleanor.

"Miss Haughton!" he exclaimed, with mingled surprise and emotion.

Eleanor was so agitated, she was obliged to lean back against her chair. She looked sad and dejected, but, to Harold's eye, was more beautiful than ever.

"I am so glad to see you," she said, recovering, and extending her hand. "How long it is since we met!"

"Long! it seems ages."

He was silent, but still he looked at her, not staringly, but with a timid, wistful gaze, that brought back the roses to her cheek, though it cast her own eyes down.

"Am I forgiven? can you ever forgive me?" he said.

"Forgive! What can you mean?"

"Have I caused you no unhappiness?"

"From any one else I should think this a cruel ques-

tion, since we owe you such great obligations—owe you everything, even to honour and life!" And at that remembrance of the past, her eyes filled with tears.

"I have done nothing to offend you, then! nothing! Ah, Eleanor, dear Eleanor! how happy you make me. You give me hope, you give me back life and strength; and more, now you are free—now that no one can stand between us, I ask you to pity me, dear Eleanor." And he took her hand, he pressed it in his own, and as her head sank on his shoulder, as her drooping tresses fell over her face, and veiled her blushes, he felt that it was his—his for ever!

They sat and talked, they knew not how long, or of what; but somehow or other—by means of a little bird, no doubt—the tidings reached the mistress of the mansion; and when the gentlemen returned from shooting, Sir Blundell, who was one of the party, was called aside, and received a communication that brought some of its old light to his now grave face. He entered the room with a blithe step, and the lovers stood before him.

"May I ask of you so much, Sir Blundell?" said Harold, earnestly. "With your consent, Eleanor will be mine."

"You have nobly won her, and I approve of her choice," replied Sir Blundell.

He gave his hand to Harold, and Eleanor threw herself in his arms, and hid her glowing face on his breast.

They were married. The bride, once dowered so richly, brought her husband only a small portion; but they are able, by Harold's industry, to maintain a liberal establishment, and live in comfort, though not in splendour. Eleanor never regrets her lost riches; and as for Harold,

he knows full well there is no bread so sweet as that which is earned, and no position so honourable as that we win for ourselves.

Phœbe and the Squire reside on their estate; and Madam Ashleigh, besides being the most beautiful, is decidedly the most popular lady in the county, which, by the way, she often crosses on horseback.

Captain Raffles has been serving in the Crimea, from which he has just returned, after continuing at his post from the first landing to the fall of Sebastopol; and, being what he familiarly calls "doubled up," he proposes to go on half-pay. The gallant officer, having no high connections, and no money, is, of course, still a Captain, and must now ever remain one. He very nearly missed being made a C.B., but it was given to a junior brother-officer, who went out to the war on the conclusion of peace, but who happens to bear a name beginning with Dowb—a claim which, as we all know, takes precedence of every other.

Mr. and Mrs. Mayburn, and their friends the Windhams, dwell in their old residences, where it is hoped, for the sake of the poor around them, they will long remain. Mr. Mayburn has retired from business; but notwithstanding his pitched battle with the operatives, he still takes the greatest interest in everything connected with the advancement of the working man, and a feeling is growing up on both sides, which masters and men alike would do well not to lose sight of.

Hawker, convicted of participation in the burglary at Nampced House, has reaped the reward of his evil life in a sentence of transportation; but nothing has ever been heard of his accomplice the sweep, though Sergeant Lockyer once intimated that he thought Lawyer Smart might "make tracks for him," if he were so inclined.

Mr. Moneypenny, after several perilous adventures, succeeded in reaching the United States, where, happily unrestrained by currency laws, he has established a bank, on his favourite foundation of paper; but, after some experience in such concerns, he declares there is still one thing wanting to give his system a fair trial; and that is, to render the paper inconvertible.

Mrs. Addlefield never returned to her former mode of life. She has quitted the dingy region of May Fair, and resides in a suburban villa, where she dresses plainly, makes no pretension, and sees but few visitors. It would be too much to say she had become a saint; but religion, of which she used to speak so much, is now less on her lips, and more in her heart, and frequently she recalls the pathetic reflection of the ancient sage—"Vanity of vanities! all is vanity!"

THE END.

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